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ASSIMILATION AND AMBIGUOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE RESILIENT MALE MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS THAT SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ASSIMILATION AND AMBIGUOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE RESILIENT MALE MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS THAT SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents
for their encouragement and prayers through this doctoral journey.

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Successful completion of an endeavor such as a dissertation is the result of a tremendous amount of hard work, commitment, and faith. This undertaking is not one I could have achieved alone. Along this journey, there have been several individuals who helped me make sense of the process and who guided me through it. Without them, I might still be trying to find my way.

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ASSIMILATION AND AMBIGUOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE RESILIENT MALE MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS THAT SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Sylvia Adelle De Leon, Ph.D.
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Supervisor: John E. Roueche

This study explores the unique characteristics and experiences of ten undocumented male Mexican immigrant students, with their resiliency and ambiguous journey as they encountered and transitioned into higher education. Five of the students attend a community college; two attend Texas State University San Marcos; and three attend a University of Texas System. Five phases of their transition are revealed: their characteristics (born and raised), journey from Mexico to the Untied States, the development of resiliency, the ability to confront and deal with ambiguity, and the resourcefulness to maintain their identity. In addition, a developmental model of immigrant resiliency was derived from the five areas explored. Within the study, the participants were asked to reflect on the support and barriers that they encountered which influenced their educational goals and aspirations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

I wanted to bind Texas and Mexico together like a raft strong enough to float out onto the ocean of time, with our past trailing in the wake behind us like a comet trail of memories.

—John Phillip Santos, Places…,1999

Background

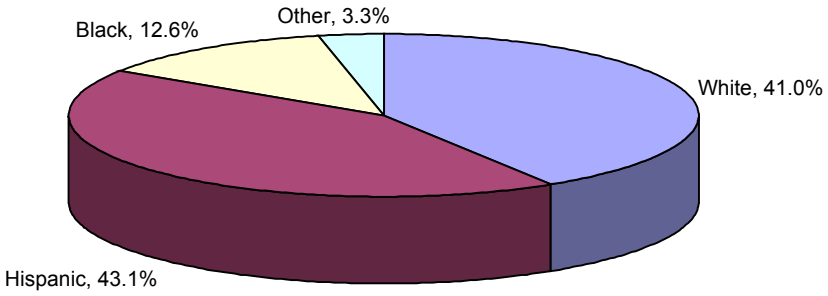
Immigration Transformations

The world is experiencing much transformation due to unprecedented immigration. Immigration is changing the world more than at any other time in history, opening up educational, political, social, cultural, and economic opportunities. The estimated number of undocumented immigrants to the U.S. from Latin America is approximately 38 million (Suarez-Orozco, 2001). The flow of immigrants to the U.S. from developing countries in Latin America and Asia has also increased dramatically in recent years. In the year 2000, the two top countries from which immigrants came were Mexico and China, respectively (Schwartz, 1996). The United States and Western Europe have been beacons for immigrants, especially since World War II (Brinbaum & Werquin, 1998; Driessen, 2000). According to Driessen (2000) the U.S. is the "traditional immigrant countr(y)" (p.12). In 1994, immigrant growth in the U.S. was at 8.5%, the greatest since the mid-1800's (Szelenyi & Chang, 2002, p.55; Vernez & Abrahamse, 1996, p.1).

Hispanics Today

As illustrated in Chart 1, the Hispanic population in 2005 is 43.1% and is projected to be the largest of all ethnicities represented in the Texas Statewide Population Age 0-19 by Ethnicity in 2005. It is evident that the Hispanic population is the youngest ethnicity group in Texas and will continue to be a source of labor for the economy.

Chart 1
Texas Statewide Population Age 0-19 by Ethnicity (2005)



The fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States have their origins in Latin American countries. In 2003, the Census Bureau confirmed that Hispanics now comprise the largest minority group in the country, numbering 38.8 million people, or 13 percent of the total U.S. population (El Nasser, 2003). This population is fanning out to new areas of the country, and many states have been taken off guard by the rapid influx of non-

English speaking immigrants into their communities (Fink, 2003). As noted by Sassen (1984) and Borjas (1999), these immigrants benefit both employers and consumers by lowering the costs of labor, which in turn lowers the costs of goods and services. Mexican immigration to the United States has increased over the last two decades and has undergone a profound transformation. Historically, most Latinos engaged in transnational strategies, living both here and there—that is shuttling between their country of birth and their country of choice (Levitt, 1996; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001). However, over the last two decades, this pattern of Mexican immigration suggests the intensification of a trend toward permanent settlement in the U.S. and, in particular, the state of Texas, which is the primary focus of this study.

The data found in Table 1, "Texas Population Distribution by Citizenship, State Data 2000-2001," is reflective of both native citizens and non-native citizens in Texas as compared to the rest of the nation. Whereas, the percentage of Texas citizens is significant, it is most noteworthy that Texas' non-native citizens total 11%, as compared to the national average of 7%. This information indicates that Texas is the state to which most immigrants migrate.

Table 1

Texas Population Distribution by Citizenship,

State Data 2000-2001, U.S. 2001

	Texas Number	Texas Percent	U.S. Number	U.S. Percent
Citizen	18,936,810	89%	264,453,080	93%
Non-Citizen	2,329,200	11%	20,624,030	7%
Total	21,266,000	100%	285,077,110	100%

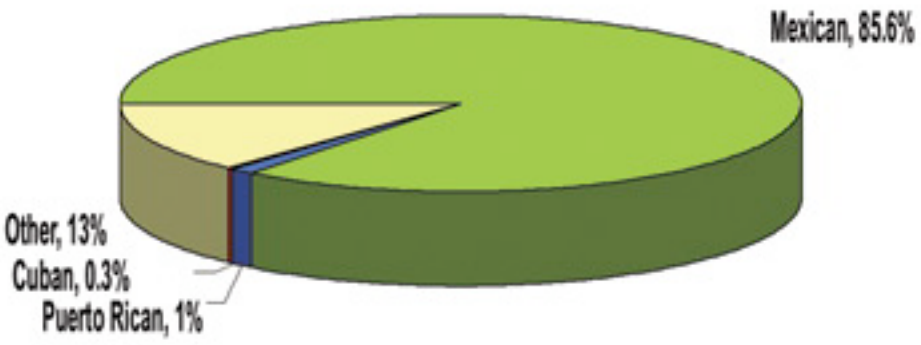
Source: 2003 Current Population Surveys, U.S. Census Bureau, March 2003

Acevedo (2004) makes the following observations regarding the nature of Mexican immigrants' experience in Texas and in the Southwest, which are relevant to the issue of proximity to Mexico and the continuous reinforcement of language and culture:

> Nearly 87% of Texan Hispanics [Chart 2] have a lineage and heritage that is closely anchored to Mexico and this fact presents several significant policy issues that must be considered here. Among those being: 1.) an evident geographic proximity with a border which extends over 1,200 miles between Texas and Mexico. This border, La Frontera, is seen as an anchor that both grounds and reinforces much of the social, cultural and linguistic relationships between Tejanos and their Mexican roots which are still very familial and dynamic. There is no evidence of any interest by Tejanos, who are now residents or citizens of the United States, to become engaged in any international or domestic political initiatives of Mexico. While Mexican President Vicente Fox has been trying to create a foothold for a demonstrated relationship between United States residents and citizens of Mexican origins, the response has been lukewarm at best and not visible to any significant level. 2.) Mexico will continue to be a primary source of both legal and illegal immigration to the United States and to Texas. This situation will continue to be a political lighting rod in that these residents, whether legal or illegal, will continue to put pressure on current limited support services. On the flipside, these individuals do make a contribution to the economy by engaging in work that is not readily attractive to American citizens. More work needs to be done to

study this issue and to present realistic policy based action items for the consideration of all governmental entities at the local, regional, state and national levels. (p. 6)

Chart 2
Origin of Hispanics in Texas



Cornelius (1998) asserts that Mexican immigrants are rapidly moving away from transnational strategies. For example, over time and across generations, Mexicans tend to remit less money, become less involved in Mexican politics, and visit Mexico less often (Cornelius, 1998). If immigration trends continue as expected—with Mexico being the nation with the most points of origin for this expanding immigration—the need for an in-depth look at the personal achievement of Mexican immigrants is both urgent and beneficial as the U.S. moves into the new millennium where the demand for technology rises exponentially. Understanding these implications are significant, which is the purpose of this research regarding Mexican immigrants.

Mexican immigrants straddle their homeland and their new life in the United States, the nexus between contrasting worlds with forces from both influencing their

developing identity. In the historical evolvement of the United States, the quest to attain uniformity in ideology, language, and participation amongst its citizenry, a process known as "Americanization," has been used by the majority society to encourage immigrants to abandon any differences such as language, cultural traditions, and other identifiable traits. This cultural and linguistic abandonment was intended to contribute to the upward mobility and inclusion of the descendants of immigrant populations (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 1995). In this study, the importance of resiliency and accommodation or rejection of policies and practices in complex organizations, such as colleges and universities, will provide another perspective to this phenomenon.

Latino Education

Today numerous educational studies document the academic achievement of the Latino student in the United States. According to Trueba and Bartolome (1997), with a U.S. Latino population approaching 38 million and Latinos accounting for a majority of the student population in some of the largest school districts, Latinos are worse off today than in the past (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995a, 1995b). Accordingly, the more "Americanized" they become, the more likely they are to engage in at-risk behaviors such as substance abuse, unprotected sex, and delinquency (Hernandez & Charney, 1998). This directly refutes assimilation theories of adaptation that hypothesize that immigrant youth do better over time and across generations (Suarez-Orozco, 2000). In a study of Latin immigrants from non-English-language backgrounds, Vaznaugh (1995) noted that although dropout rates have declined in recent years among

African Americans and European Americans, the Latino rate has done the opposite. According to the Census Bureau, in 1992 roughly 50% of Hispanics ages 16 to 24 dropped out of high school, up from 30% in 1990 (GAO, 1994). Garcia (1994) reports that the dropout rates of non-white and Latino students is two to three times the rate of European American students. Latinas alone, ages 16 to 24, showed a 30% dropout rate, compared to 12.9 percent for African Americans and 8.2 percent for European-American (Ginorio & Huston, 2001).

Acevedo (2004) notes the importance of attrition in the state of Texas and its implications regarding Mexican American students.

> The issue of public school attrition or dropouts has been a contentious one for many years in Texas and in most national school districts. In Texas, the issue has received more attention because of the fact that the cohort of concern to citizens and advocates of quality education has been the Mexican American student. Another polarizing factor has been the way that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has kept records based on formulas that are too complex to address here. Suffice it to state that this matter has surfaced to the political level that the 78th Session of the Texas State Legislature mandated that the Texas Education Agency present a realistic and more statistically validated formula for how it measures attrition in Texas public education. This agency will be presenting its new formulas to the next session of the legislature which convenes in January of 2005. Data provided in Table 2.0 is even difficult to fully interpret here and it may be that TEA is either claiming an 18.9% non-completion rate of some sort of educational outcome, or that 6.2% of all of school year 2001 dropped out. It is this type of data reporting that has frustrated the legislature, policy brokers, researchers and concerned citizens and which will be hopefully ameliorated during the upcoming legislative session. (p. 15)

Table 2: Texas Education Agency Attrition Data for FY 2001

County	Student Status	Number	Cohort	Rate	County Rank	Year
TEXAS	Continued HS	19,580	249,161	7.9%	N/A	2001
TEXAS	Dropped out	15,551	249,161	6.2%	N/A	2001
TEXAS	Graduated	202,052	249,161	81.1%	N/A	2001
TEXAS	Received GED	11,978	249,161	4.8%	N/A	2001

Source: *Texas Education Agency, 2001 Annual Report.*
[Graduation status for entire cohort of ninth grade students at the time the class graduates]

The Intercultural Development and Research Association (IDRA) has been the most vocal public policy critic of TEA over the past 20 years and has challenged the state educational agency at every legislative session or public forum on the issue of student attrition in Texas. The latest IDRA attrition study shows that 143,175 students in the Texas class of 2002 were lost from enrollment due to attrition. According to IDRA, between the 1985-86 and 2001-02 school years, nearly two million students have been dropped from public school enrollment with estimated cumulative costs in the state of Texas in excess of $488 billion. The average cost per student dropout is estimated to be $265,268 over a 40-year period of employment. The statewide attrition rate has ranged, according to IDRA, from a low of 31 percent in 1988-89 and 1989-90 to a high of 43 percent in 1996-97 (IDRA, 2002).

Congressional Research Service found that this group had the lowest median number of school years completed (9.9) and the lowest proportion of high school graduates (40.8%). According to the California Department of Education (2001), the high school graduation rate for Latinos was 56.9% for school year 1999-2000. Even though, Hispanic college enrollment has more than tripled in the past two decades,

according to the twentieth Anniversary Minorities in Higher Education Annual Status Report from the American Council on Education, Hispanics continue to suffer the lowest high school and college graduation rates of any major population group. The 2004 U.S. Census Bureau reports that for the population ages 25 and over as of March 2002, Hispanics had the lowest proportion of college graduates (11 percent), compared to 29 percent of non-Hispanic whites with college degrees and 17 percent of African Americans (Hispanic Journal, 2003).

The participation of students in Texas Higher Education continues with an expanding base of young adults [Table 3] in community colleges.

Table 3
Enrollment by Ethnicity for Texas Community, State, and Technical Colleges (Fall 2000-02)

Ethnicity	Number of Enrollees 2000	Percent of Enrollment 2000	Number of Enrollees 2001	Percent of Enrollment 2001	Number of Enrollees 2002	Percent of Enrollment 2002	Percent of TX Population (2000 Census)	Percent of Tx Population (2002 Estimate)
White	236,429	52.80%	248,620	52.00%	264,350	51.30%	52.40%	51.00%
Hispanic	129,308	28.90%	138,718	29.00%	152,149	29.50%	32.00%	34.00%
Black	49,414	11.00%	52,730	11.00%	57,465	11.10%	11.50%	11.00%
Asian/Pacific	17,645	3.90%	18,806	3.90%	20,282	3.90%	2.60%	3.50%
Native American	2,090	0.50%	2,327	0.50%	2,495	0.50%	1.50%	0.50%
International	10,695	2.40%	12,608	2.60%	13,887	2.70%		
Not Reported	2,417	0.50%	4,504	0.90%	5,143	1.00%		
Total	447,998	100%	478,313	100%	515,771	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

The previously mentioned statistical data provides an undeniable reality concerning the educational attainment of Mexican immigrants in America. In looking to the future, Trueba (1998) projects that there is no immediate end to the flow of Mexican immigration. This reality makes it even more necessary to focus attention on our

institutions of learning with an understanding that the efforts to "educate" the Mexican immigrant have been unsuccessful in a society that proclaims a "justice for all" proposition. The past has paved a future that depicts the student of Mexican-origin as a person who is capable of achieving his or her dreams. As Hank Levin stated in an interview with Brandt (1992): "The way you define children has an awful lot to do with the way you work with them" (p. 20). The years of stereotyping and the resulting feelings of inferiority combined with present day institutional practices that exclude and sort students by skin color, class, and proficiency in English, denies them the opportunity of a just education (Olsen, 1997). Seda and Bixler-Marquez (1994) write that education is the way for Latinos and other groups to escape poverty; however, the inability of the Mexican immigrant to attain a college education remains an issue that hinders their advancement. Trueba and Bartolome (1997) warn that the economic and technological future of the United States depends on the educational success of Latinos as well as African Americans. If the United States does not want to view "what appears to be a growing underclass," then addressing the socioeconomic and educational situations of Latino immigrants should be of high priority to the nation (Seda & Bixler-Marquez, 1994, p. 196). Nevertheless, a college education is necessary for Latino immigrants to achieve economic success in America. Despite the many challenges within the U.S. socio-culture system that negatively impact and discriminate, it is Latino immigrants' resiliency that allows them to strive and continue pursuing an education. Among the socio-cultural factors considered are the educational and occupational attainment levels of parents, family income and composition, ethnic and language minority status, and the

absence of learning materials in the home. Gary Orfield (1995) claims these issues forecast problems for a community that is rapidly becoming the largest minority group in the United States. Latino advocates express that intervention and support are necessary if these students are to succeed in the U.S. educational system. In this research, a key focus will be whether resiliency and family support inspire Mexican immigrants to overcome the barriers that keep them from reaching their goals.

Resiliency and Family Support

To further research and understand the importance of the motivations behind successful Mexican immigrants, one must understand the issues of resiliency and family support. Suarez-Orozco's (1998) states, "Why is it that some immigrants thrive in schools while others give up on schools as the route to a better tomorrow" (p. 21)? For those who do succeed academically, we know little about them and what "distinguishes them from their classmates who experience academic underachievement and failure" (Alva & Padilla, 1995, p. 1). Achor and Morales (1990) mirror the same idea: "Our long preoccupation with seeking explanations for minority failure may have diverted our attention from an equally significant: how and why they sometimes succeed" (pp. 271-272). Accordingly, it is important to highlight the issue of resiliency in the educational achievement of Mexican immigrants. As Mexican immigrants leave their home and pursue a new life—and ultimately an education in America—they are often confronted with values, prejudices, and political realities of the powerful dominant society. The possibility of improving these confrontations as a step toward addressing assimilation and

academic underachievement is dependent on the multiple relationships both inside and outside institutions of learning. The basis of social capital and resiliency, together with immigrants' voices, will be used in this research to approach the issue of Mexican immigrants' perseverance toward higher education attainment.

According to Putnam (1995), James S. Coleman deserves recognition for developing the social capital structure. In "Social Capital and the Creation of Human Capital," Coleman (1988) refers to the social capital of the family as relations between children and parents or other prominent members in the life of the nuclear family. Social capital makes it possible for human capital (changes that enable the individual to act in new ways) to be passed from one person to another, making the phenomenon a resource for educational growth within the family and the community outside the home. "Both social capital in the family and social capital outside it, in the adult community surrounding the school, showed evidence of considerable value in reducing the probability of dropping out of high school" (Coleman, 1988, pp. 118-119).

In "A Social Capital Framework for Understanding the Socialization of Racial Minority Children and Youths," social capital is "reserved for instrumental or supportive relationships with institutional agents" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p.7). Since these relationships are considered "systematically problematic" for low-status immigrants such as Mexican immigrants, the significance of social capital is highlighted for this ethnic minority group. Other scholars (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995a; Valenzuela 1999; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994) have referred to "familism," family relations

within the home of Mexican-origin people, as a form of social capital in the enhancement of educational lifelong success.

As stated by Ho (1987), most ethnic minorities such as Mexican immigrants endorse a sociocentric worldview promoting both individual and collective resilience. Mexican immigrants tend to form strong social and emotional connections with others, embrace group identity, and value community welfare. Under migration distress, they often reaffirm their bond with others and increase their sense of connection. This connection to a larger group enhances the immigrant's resilience (Lifton, 1988).

The premise of resiliency is "the ability to bounce back successfully despite the exposure to severe risks" (Benard, 1993, p. 44). Resiliency is of particular interest in a discussion of personal achievement due to its potential explanation of "successful immigrants"—those who, despite multiple barriers, manage to reach their personal and academic goals. The concepts of social capital and resiliency are closely related in that the personal and environmental factors supportive of resiliency are developed, established, and maintained through various forms of assimilation. This process is ongoing due to the steady flow of an individual's numerous complex relations throughout life (Luna, 2002).

Ambiguous Loss and Migration

Immigrants' many internal conflicts, moods, and behaviors can be more easily understood when seen through the lens of "ambiguous loss." The concept of ambiguous loss stated by Pauline Boss (1991, 1999) describes situations in which loss is unclear,

incomplete, or partial. Latino immigrants, like many other immigrants, experience some degree of loss, grief, and mourning. These experiences have been compared with the process of grief and mourning followed by the death of loved ones (Volkan and Zintl, 1993; Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989). However, migration loss has special characteristics that distinguish it from other kinds of losses. Compared with the obvious, inevitable fact of death, migration loss is both larger and smaller (Falicov, 1993). It is larger because migration brings with it losses of all kinds. Family members and friends who stay behind, the native language, the customs and rituals, and the land itself are in oblivion. The sweeping effects of these losses touch the extended kin back home and reach into the future generations born in the new land (Falicov, 1993).

Correspondingly, migration loss is also smaller than death, because despite the grief and mourning accompanied by physical, cultural, and social separation, the losses are not absolutely clear, complete, and irretrievable. Thus, to the immigrant the ambiguous loss is still alive but is just not immediately reachable or present. Unlike the bitter end of death, after migration it is always possible to dream about the imminent return or reconciliation with family back in their home country. As a result, all of these elements develop a weave of emotional feelings: happiness and sadness, compensation and loss, presence and void which affect the immigrants' grieving to be incomplete, postponed, and ambiguous (Falicov, 1995, 1998).

Latino immigrants come with a marginalized status in a nation that disproportionately thrusts them into a path of downward assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Latino educational attainment in the U.S. is essential to their success.

It is important to first understand the immigration issues and constraints that these Mexican immigrants endure and experience. Correspondingly, this study will examine the factors that contribute to the ethno cultural and psychological issues that affect their ambiguous losses and their assimilation in the U.S. Most importantly, this study will address the Mexican immigrant's resiliency when confronted with these obstacles to succeed and obtain a higher education**.**

Statement of the Problem

This study will address the lack of accommodation and access to higher education experienced by Mexican immigrants and how their experience demonstrates a resiliency to confront and navigate a system laden with ambiguity.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the unique characteristics and experiences of undocumented male Mexican immigrants who are currently enrolled in a public post-secondary education institution. This study will analyze the factors that demonstrate their resiliency in working to attain their educational goals by adapting to and effectively responding to ambiguous conditions they encounter in colleges and universities, among those being admissions, counseling, registration, participation in classes, use of language and technology, completion of course requirements, participation in group projects.

Research Questions

1. What institutional barriers confront male Mexican immigrants as they attempt to access American higher education institutions? [Policies, admissions policies, financial requirements, language, documentation, etc.]
2. What coping skills and resources do male Mexican immigrants use to access and participate successfully in a training or academic transfer program in a college or university? [Some of the resources may be institutional or community, familial or a network of friends, etc.]
3. What characteristics do these immigrants demonstrate that exhibit both their resiliency and capacity to respond effectively to ambiguous circumstances within a higher education environment?
4. Is the target population of this study changed or socialized by their higher education experience and in what ways is this change demonstrated (such as in acquired skills, new capacity, an understanding of American society, an understanding of complex organization, or socialization to higher education). In addition, did this population demonstrate any resistance to personal change or any accommodation to certain change requirements?

Significance of the Study

Each year a significant number of undocumented male Mexican immigrants come to the United States in search of opportunities to improve the quality of their lives. This

study will be significant to community college governance boards, administrators, faculty and support services staff for a variety of reasons, among those being:

- It will present insights about a unique population that is becoming the majority ethnic population from which emerging enrollment will originate [Closing the Gaps in Texas Higher Education, 2002].
- It will identify and delineate the experience of this ethnic population as it gains entry to the higher education and all of its complexities, which are policy based and result in many programs and services that are not part and parcel of the immigrants' social experience.
- It will identify those institutional procedures and processes that mitigate for or against the immigrants' experience in higher education as being one replete with barriers or one which results in successful outcomes such as program completion or graduation to a senior educational institution.
- It will provide recommendations to guide both policy and program development that result in a proactive environment that is directed toward the success of this population.
- Finally, it will provide a descriptive frame of reference of how immigrants in higher education cope, demonstrate their resilience or even resist certain institutional practices that they find in direct contrast to their social and cultural reference base or experience.

Limitations

This investigation is limited to a small number of undocumented male Mexican immigrants in Texas. So, generalization is not possible. Also, concepts used in the anthropological and sociological literature seems to occur across subgroups and, therefore, may justify some generalizations about the "Latino experience" as a whole (Falicov, 1995). These findings will not necessarily represent other populations, age groups, ethnic groups, or language minority students.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

> *The silence of educators and refusal to acknowledge the social, political, and economic implications of their role in marginalizing immigrants and racializing children are a continuation and perpetuation of myths that inequities are the result of individual capabilities and efforts. Beneath this denial is fear and anger, and (sometimes) outright racism.*
>
> —Olsen, 1997

Overview

This study reviews the unique characteristics that are evident in undocumented male Mexican immigrant students that may impact their successes and resiliency as they encounter American higher education institutions. Given the ambiguous losses that these immigrants endure when assimilating in America, it is noteworthy to understand the motivating factors and distinctiveness that the resilient immigrants possess. This study describes the experience of acculturation and assimilation, factors that play a significant role in the various levels of achievement for immigrant students. Immigrants who come to the United States with little or no education often have greater difficulty integrating into the U.S. workforce and society in general. The next section provides the background and need for the study while examining the contributing factors for undocumented male Mexican immigrants within the context of resiliency, assimilation, ambiguous losses, history, education, cultural values, and immigration experiences.

Resiliency

Theories

"Resiliency theory" (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 2000, p. 1) has existed in the literature for some time and more recently in regards to immigrants. Although some of the research applies to the Latino population as a whole, emphasis will be placed on the Mexican immigrant and the people of Mexican origin. According to Benard (1993), resiliency is "the ability to bounce back successfully despite exposure to severe risks" (p. 44). Chavkin and Gonzalez (2000) write that it is "the ability to cope with adversity" (p. 21). Werner and Smith (1992) state that resiliency and protective factors are "counterparts to both vulnerability, which denotes an individual's susceptibility to a disorder, and risk factors, which are biological or psychosocial hazards that increase the likelihood of a negative developmental outcome in a group of people" (p. 3).

Rutter (1985) noted how an individual's resistance to stress is relative, not absolute, and that its occurrence can be affected by a lifetime of events. This understanding makes it evident that resiliency is in constant flux, especially in the case of Mexican immigrant families whose movement between the home country and the host society can encompass constant change (Alva & Padilla, 1995; Gordon, 1996).

Characteristics

Benard (1991,1997) lists four common attributes of resilient children: (a) social competence—empathy, flexibility, communication skills, sense of humor; (b) problem-solving skills—planning, critical consciousness, resourcefulness; (c) autonomy—sense of

identity, self-agency, accomplishment, self-awareness, detachment and (d) a sense of purpose and future—goal directedness, achievement motivation, persistence, optimism, spiritual connectedness, and meaning. People use these naturally occurring attributes automatically, or as Benard (1997) explains, human beings are "genetically wired" to produce and use them.

The ability of individuals to withstand various forms of adversity depends on the presence or absence of protective factors stemming from childhood (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 2000). Past studies (Rutter, 1985, 1987) as well as present studies (Alva & Padilla, 1995) describe how protective factors are comprised of personal and environmental resources, implying that the state of resiliency can change over time as the individual is confronted with more complex situations. Similar to Benard's resiliency attributes, personal resources are "personality characteristics and attitudes that children possess that serve to mediate the effects of detrimental environmental circumstances," whereas, environmental resources are "external sources of information, support, and affective feedback, which, when available, can affect how well children adapt to their environment" (Alva & Padilla, p. 2).

The Resilient Immigrant Student

The state of public education in the United States will eventually reach a point where the dominant society will be forced to view the country's population and the world in general through a lens other than an American one. The immigrants of 1890 to 1920 were "uniformly white," meaning that skin color was not a major barrier to participating

in the American mainstream, including the nation's schools (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Ware (1935), however, described a different situation for the Italians of Greenwich Village in the 1920s and 1930s: the schools had little in common with children's life worlds and the cultural and behavioral norms of the home were disregarded, setting the children "vigorously against the school." Accounts such as this question whether assimilation was easily attained with the first wave of immigration. It also tells how strongly people are tied to their cultural and behavioral norms.

Although educational practices in the U.S. (1856 to the present) have undergone little change in regard to the goal of "Americanizing"" the student, this "human production line" is bound for self-destruction. Unlike the assimilation of people in the past, we are living in an age where the process of adapting to American schooling is described by such hypotheses as straight-line assimilation, accommodation without assimilation, and immigrant optimism (Kao & Tienda, 1995). Using Gordon's (1964) categories, Gans (1992) states, "While dark-skinned immigrants from overseas cultures will also acculturate, racial discrimination will not encourage their assimilation, at least not into white society" (p. 177).

The reality of today is that the system of integrating some immigrants and minority groups is no longer working with the efficiency of the past. Another significant reality, as we move further into the technological era, is that the dominant elite can no longer assume that low-skilled jobs are sufficient to sustain those who have not acquired some level of formal education. This notion has particular implications for generations to come, especially the Latino population with its high poverty rate and low educational

attainment. As Trueba's (1987) words explain: "Not only does this nation's future economic and scientific superiority depend on the success of minority education, but so does its survival as a democratic nation" (p. vi).

The Process of Assimilation and Naturalization

This section's main objective is to outline how naturalization is defined and understood through an assimilation framework. In the first section, the definition of assimilation and its assumptions will be reviewed, paying particular attention to the model developed by Gordon (1964). Given recent debates about the applicability of this framework to understand the post 1965 immigration, the issue of how scholars have rearticulated this concept to address those concerns will be addressed. In the next section, previous research on immigration to will be examined in order to highlight how certain factors of assimilation have been used to explain the propensity to become a U.S. citizen.

Overview of Assimilation

Within the immigration literature, the assimilation paradigm has dominated the ways in which the immigrant experience and adaptation is described, understood, and analyzed. Accordingly, the act of becoming a naturalized U.S. citizen, a step only an immigrant can undertake, has also been interpreted as a product of assimilation. But what exactly is the assimilation model? Within the last 20 years, there has been much debate, confusion, and reevaluation around this term and its place in the immigrant research (Alba and Nee, 1997; Alba, 1999; Barkan, 1995; Brubaker, 2001; Rumbaut, 1997; Foner,

2001). In the framework of assimilation, this study returns to origins of this concept to examine its central assumptions and its relevance to the immigration experience.

The two major sources for the assimilation framework originate from the works of Park and Burgess (1921) and Gordon (1964). According to Park and Burgess (1969), assimilation is "a process of interpenetration and fusion which persons and groups acquire memories, sentiments, attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated in a common cultural life" (p. 360). In other words, assimilation is the method by which two or more distinct groups come together to share common ideals, goals, and culture. For this to occur, unlike accommodation where immigrants simply adjust to their new environment by learning the language and other behaviors, the social structure and relations of the host society must allow for full and complete inclusion of the immigrant. Therefore, assimilation incorporates the immigrant into the host society at all levels. At this stage according to Park and Burgess (1921), the lack of conflict among groups reflects the shared meaning of commonness and unity.

Concepts of Assimilation

From this definition (Park and Burgess), Gordon (1964) develops his conceptualization of assimilation. His contribution to the assimilation paradigm is to explicitly define components of the assimilation process. In order to do this, he defines the ideal type of assimilation and ascertains the stages needed to complete that process. For Gordon, the ideal type of assimilation requires that the immigrant group and their offspring become completely absorbed by the host society. Specifically, he states that all

elements of the immigrant culture disappear and by the onset of the second generation (i.e., children of the immigrant), there is no distinction between the immigrant group and the host society. Moreover, the host society remains intact and unchanged (Espitia, 2003).

The Steps of Assimilation

Gordon (1964) identifies seven components crucial to the assimilation process. The order of these processes is also important as one leads to the other.

1. **Acculturation** is the first step toward assimilating. During this step, group members learn and adopt the cultural and behavioral patterns of the dominant society. For example, immigrants take on the language, dress, values, religion, musical taste, food, and other similar customs of the host society. These changes occur at the individual level with the immigrant as the primary actor. In addition, acculturation is more than the acquisition of necessary skills to navigate successfully through the host society. It is also the full incorporation of these new customs into the immigrant's life so that any remnants of the "origin" culture are eliminated and the new culture is transferred to the children of the immigrants. Although Gordon (1964) specifies this type of acculturation in the assimilation process, in the later chapters of his book he does acknowledge that it does not generally occur within the first generation because many immigrants form ethnic enclaves where they continue to practice their "native" culture and maintain friendships with other

compatriots. However, these communities are perceived as transitory space that facilitate immigrants' incorporation into their new home.

2. **Structural assimilation** is the second step in the assimilation process. This process involves the participation of immigrants and their offspring in the social structures of the host society. For Gordon, this means that the immigrant are interacting with members of the host society through groups, organizations, and institutions such as schools, churches, work, neighborhoods, social clubs, etc. Again, the emphasis at this stage is the everyday dealings and exposure to the host society, such that personal relationships are developed between the two groups. Typical examples of this stage are the friendships that develop between children of immigrants and native-born individuals in schools and neighborhoods. This stage is critical because the formation of these primary relations subsequently allow for other types of assimilation to occur. The assumption is that as immigrants and native-born individuals intermingle, the social distance between them decreases, particularly as the immigrant increasingly embraces more aspects of the dominant culture.
3. **Marital assimilation** is the third step and takes place when the immigrant marries a member of the host society and becomes further incorporated into the fabric of that community through family relations.
4. **Identification with the country of reception** brings the immigrant closer to feeling a sense of connection or belonging (Gordon, 1964).

5. The next two phases of the process are the most difficult barriers to full assimilation because the change must occur within the host society, no not the immigrant. Similar to the definition of Park and Burgess, Gordon recognizes that for a group to successfully assimilate, the host society as a group and individuals must be willing to accept the immigrants and treat them as equals. Thus, any systematic discrimination or prejudicial sentiments by the native-born individuals must be eliminated to allow for the full inclusion of the immigrant group. In other words, barriers should not exist to limit the social and economic mobility of the immigrant group. Gordon (1964) identifies this behavior as **receptional assimilation** (i.e., elimination of discrimination at the societal level) and **attitude receptional** assimilation (i.e., elimination of prejudice at the individual level). This progression symbolizes the acceptance of the immigrant group into the community and its ability to participate in all aspects of society.
6. **Civic assimilation** is the last process to occur and is an absence of value and power conflict between the two groups (Gordon, 1964). In other words, the political needs of the immigrant's origin community are represented by the same political needs of the host society. Furthermore, difference in political agenda is not marked by membership in a particular ethnic group. Civic assimilation completes the process of assimilation where members of the immigrant group cannot be distinguished from members of the host society in any capacity.

Contemporary Assimilation

Contemporary assimilation has come under attack in the last 20 years. Many scholars and advocates of multiculturalism have discredited the concept of assimilation because it assumes that immigrants should discard their "cultural" baggage in exchange for a "better" set of values and practices. This is reinforced by showing that immigrants who fail to assimilate are the most marginalized and least successful groups in the U.S. (Brubaker, 2001). In other words, assimilation is associated with upward mobility, and ethnic retention is associated with failure. In addition, scholars argue that the assimilation framework was period specific to the European immigrant cohort from 1880-1920 because of their homogeneity as a racial group (i.e., "white"). Specifically, descendants of this immigrant group were able to integrate themselves into the U.S. without "ethnic" identification. However, given the racial diversity of the post-1965 immigration (predominantly from Asia and Latin America), such integration would not be possible because of the assigned status of race (Alba and Nee, 1997). Another critique also points to the static notion of a "core" culture, as if U.S. society were homogenous and not affected by the impacts of immigration and the exchanges between the newly arrived and established groups (Espitia, 2003).

In response to these critiques against assimilation, scholars maintain that the original "scholarly" definition of assimilation did not entail or even advocate conformity to the dominant culture (Alba and Nee, 1997; Brubaker 2001). Rather, assimilation is an objective question of inquiring about the incorporation of immigrants into society (Alba

and Nee, 1997). In fact, Gordon outlines with detail two other types of assimilation patterns—the melting pot and cultural pluralism. In addition, emphasis is placed on the multi-generation process of assimilation (Brubaker, 2001). Therefore, it is still too soon to examine post-1965 immigration given that the third and fourth generations are not yet sizeable populations. In terms of the racial component, Alba and Nee (1997) point to Asians and light skin Latinos to show that racial boundaries are shifting. Finally, given the heterogeneity of the U.S. and patterns of "downward" or segmented assimilation among certain second-generation immigrants, research also reveals that there are various subgroups to which immigrants can enter. Overall, the concept of assimilation is rearticulated as a way to ask questions about the immigrant adaptation experience, particularly in regard to its localized host society.

Historical Context

Attacks on the person and psyche of the Mexican immigrant in the United States occur at the social, political, and educational levels. The continuance of symbolic violence within these three levels has grown from what social psychologist Leon Festinger (1957) refers to as "cognitive dissonance," in which those who determine to exploit other people modify their opinions about another to bring them into line with their actions or planned actions. Throughout history, this has enabled those in power to justify their actions while carrying out mistreatment of others. The Treaty of Hidalgo marked the end of the Mexican-American War, but it did not end hostilities between the United States and Mexico. Rather, the distinct differences between the two cultures served as

markers to maintain an oppressive relationship between Euro-Americans and Mexican-Americans (San Miguel, 1999).

Though the United States is comprised of a multiplicity of ethnicities and cultures, the dominant traditions of this nation are grounded in England. This nation's language, religion, law, and political and economic organization carry on in the ideals of the Anglo-American (Rosenbaum, 1998). Primary relationships through race, custom, religion, and language form the basis for ethnic identification. As set forth by Rosenbaum (1998), "Mexican Americans have been caught in the tensions created between ethnic identification and national unity. With marked identifiable differences between people of Mexican and American identity the distinctions that comprise each group also serve to distinguish group membership" (p. 13).

Nineteenth century Americans perceived the distinct features and characteristics of Mexicans as threats on three levels (Rosenbaum, 1998). First of all, those upholding native views perceived Mexicans as an inferior race and as a threat to the dominance of the American population. Second, the American population assumed that Mexican Catholics would have greater allegiance to the Pope, a foreign power, rather than to the American nation. Third, the Spanish language usage of Mexicans served as a threat to the English speaking Anglo-Americans whose goal was to enact uniformity in language usage. These three factors sustained the belief that the Mexican people had nothing to contribute to the great American melting pot while providing the means for "cognitive dissonance" and the actions that followed (Rosenbaum, 1998).

Distinct cultural and racial markers identified and separated those who were Mexican and those who were American. These markers provided the basis for resistance to one another's culture, language, and customs and were entrenched long before the Mexican-American War. These differences along with political and territorial proximity created subsequent conflict between the Mexican and American nations. Therefore, Mexicans, due to their very nature, were labeled as unable to assimilate as the colonizing forces of United States expansionism collided upon Mexican territory (Borunda, 2002).

Sam Houston made 19th century United States intentions quite clear, "The Anglo-Saxon race must pervade the whole southern extremity of this vast continent. The Mexicans are no better than the Indians and I see no reason why we should not take their land..." (Martinez, 1991, p. 25). The ongoing expansionism fueled by the American ideology of manifest destiny pushed forward inevitable conflict.

In the early 1800's, Mexico invited Euro-American settlement of Texas, a northern state of the Mexican republic. Mexico's only request of settlers was that they obey the conditions set by the Mexican government—that they become Catholics and take an oath of allegiance to Mexico. The settlers, in turn, were resentful of the agreement. In defiance of Mexican laws, Texans introduced slavery in this frontier region though Mexico had abolished this practice on September 15, 1829 (Acuna, 2000). This perceptual difference in ideology, religious practice, and the American forces of manifest destiny laid the ground for an American invasion that eventually resulted in the ceding of the greater portion of Mexico's northern lands to the United States.

From this pivotal period in which the Treaty of Hidalgo sealed American victory over Mexican military forces, all subsequent generations of Mexican descent by virtue of colonization have been relegated to the status of involuntary immigrants (Rosenbaum, 1998). The first form of subordination and deception enacted by the United States over Mexicans was to violate Articles VIII and IX of the Treaty that granted United States citizenship to all Mexicans who remained in the ceded territory. Then, rather than honor Mexico's more liberal racial legislation, the United States instituted racialized legislation that gave full citizenship only to Mexicans who were considered White and assigned inferior status to people on the basis of race (Menchaca, 1999).

Additionally, the United States conferred full political rights only to free Whites, while Blacks and Indians could be enslaved and indentured in most states. People of mixed European and Indian ancestry could not be enslaved but were not granted the right to vote, practice law, become naturalized citizens, or marry Anglo-Americans (Menchaca, 1999). Regardless of their place of birth, this period marked the beginning of subscribed second-class status in which Mexican's race, culture, and language precluded access to the ideals of inclusion to the United States (Borunda, 2002). Despite the existing elements of "cognitive dissonance" and defamation, those who did immigrate were able to maintain deep ties to their country through many visits while experiencing an ethnic renewal in their established barrios in the U.S.

However, technically not immigrants, Mexicans choosing to remain in the present Southwest United States after the Mexican American War became U.S. citizens per the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This population would serve as the foundation for

ethnic communities that would soon start arriving in the ensuing years. At the turn of the 20th century, in the midst of U.S. industrialization and transformation into a capitalist economy, the demand for labor was high given the rapid developments of railroads, mines, construction, and agriculture. With contract labor from China and Japan eliminated through legislation, U.S. companies in the west looked south to fulfill its demand for cheap and "returnable" labor (Espitia, 2003).

Another important wave of Mexican immigration began with the Bracero Program, a 1942 initiative between the U.S. and Mexican governments to formally import cheap and temporary labor into the U.S. to fulfill the labor shortage caused by World War II. Labor recruiters were sent to the interior of Mexico to gather these "contract" workers. The program lasted until 1964, and during its 22-year period, a simultaneous flow of non-Bracero and undocumented laborers entered the U.S. Although many returned to Mexico, a sizable portion of workers remained in the U.S. and began bringing their families to join them (Espitia, 2003).

With the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1965 and economic recession in Mexico, the migration of Mexicans into the U.S increased enormously. In addition, the composition of the migration flow has shifted from being predominantly males from rural areas to include more women, children, and individuals from urban areas. Some argue whether this demographic change along with the availability of yearlong employment has altered the temporary nature of the Mexican migration to a more permanent settlement experience (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Cornelius, 2001; Massey, 2001). In addition, the legalization of over 2.1 million Mexicans through the provisions of the Immigration

Reform and Control Act of 1986 has further stabilized this population (U.S. Department of Labor, 1996). Nonetheless, undocumented migration continues to compose a sizeable segment of Mexican immigrants to the U.S.

In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act was passed in an attempt to decrease the number and flow of undocumented immigrants into the United States. According to many theorists, this act had the opposite of its intended effect (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996; Kanaiaupuni, 2000). There were two important provisions in the act, one being an amnesty program to legalize the status of undocumented immigrants who had resided a particular amount of time in the United States. The second provision enacted civil and criminal sanctions against employers who were caught hiring undocumented immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996). Employers were able to get around the law because while they were required to check for legal documentation, they were not required to investigate or verify that the documents were valid. The law actually increased the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States both by allowing employers to continue, and even increase, their hiring practices and by creating a larger population of legalized immigrants who might then be in the position to sponsor the migration of relatives. At the moment, Mexicans are estimated to comprise half (2.7 million) of the unauthorized immigrant population in the U.S. (Bean, Corona, Tuiran, Woodrow-Lafield, Van Hook, 2001).

Not surprisingly, Mexicans are concentrated in the southwestern states of the U.S.: California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. As a group, they tend to have lower levels of education and tend to be concentrated in occupations with low

wages (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996). And although the length of their stay in the United States is increasing, Mexicans continue to travel back and forth regularly to visit family members, deliver remittances, or for business reasons. As a result, these forms of transnational activities have become constant, and with the implementation of 1995 Mexican legislation allowing dual nationality, Mexicans can now "formally" participate and claim membership in two nations (Espitia, 2003).

There are a number of explanations for the concentration of Latino immigrants in the southern part of the United States. First, Portes and Rumbaut (1996) point to the importance of "geographical propinquity" to the country of origin for early immigrants. They note that just as early European immigrants were concentrated on the Atlantic coast, and early Asian immigrants were concentrated on the Pacific coast, Latino immigrants have been strongly concentrated in the southwestern United States. For Mexican and other Latin American immigrants, settling as near as possible to their countries of origin reduces the costs of their initial migration as well as return trips. In addition, "the climate and environment in the Southwestern states are most similar to those in many Latin American countries especially Mexico" (Portes and Rumbaut, p. 29).

Other explanations for the geographic concentration of Mexican immigrants in particular states are labor recruitment and chain migration. According to Rumbaut (1994), labor recruitment was a precipitating factor in the process of Mexican migration to many parts of the Southwest. At the beginning of the 20th century, Mexican laborers were recruited to work in agriculture, mining, construction, and on railroads in the Southwest and the Midwest (Rumbaut, 1994; Massey, Durand & Malone, 2002). "Once

immigrants had settled in these areas it became likely that family members and friends would come to join them, starting a chain migration pattern" (Massey, 1999, p. 306). According to Rumbaut (1994), this process is most powerful among undocumented immigrants and working-class immigrants. These are the people most in need of kinship and friendship networks upon arrival in a new land.

Mexican Education in the U.S.

> *Through our ancestors we have been the concepts, history, and possibility of who we are today. We are not born in a vacuum without history or connection to all of humanity. Therefore, it is important that we think of knowledge as something that an individual cannot achieve alone.*
>
> (Ada & Beutel, 1993, p. 32)

Past and recent studies (Manuel, 1930, 1965; Montejano, 1987; Huntington, 2000) refer to educating Mexicans as the "Mexican Problem," implying that Mexicans were not welcomed into the educational realm or that they were to be tolerated in some particular way. The approaches to educating Mexican children make one wonder if there was ever a real interest in those involved, especially in the years prior to 1950.

As Mexican children entered the schools of southern California (1920 to 1950), the majority of Americans saw them as a problem (Fitzgerald, 1971). In The Handbook of Texas Online (Talamante, 2000):

> [T]he early schooling (1540 to 1836) of Texas' diverse population (indigenous groups, Spaniards, and mestizos) strove to teach "behavior patterns" in preparation for life in missions, towns, and presidios: The

> primary purpose of these institutions was to settle, civilize, and control the Indian population. (p. 1)

Between 1836 and 1900, private individuals, churches, and public officials viewed public schooling as a way of "preserving the social order" (Handbook of Texas Online 2000, p. 1). Thus, the goal was not to develop the individual for her own personal worth, but to benefit those in power by implementing and adhering to a pre-established social order. Further evidence of this trend is supported by actions on the part of the dominant population to "isolate" the Mexicans, using what has been referred to as "social separation" (Wollenberg, 1976; Montejano, 1987) or "social apartness" (Menchaca, 1995). As one California educator wrote:

> One of the first demands made from a community in which there is a large Mexican population is for a separate school. The reasons advanced for this demand are generally from a selfish viewpoint of the English-speaking public and are based largely on the theory that the Mexican is a menace to the health and morals of the rest of the community. (Stanley, 1920, p. 714)

Mexican Segregation

Manuel (1930) explains that the creation of separate schools was for the purpose of maintaining a viable labor force in Texas' growing agricultural industry. "Educating" the Mexican children was thought to be an attraction for the working parents. Montejano (1987) claims that support of this human "labor market" was the basis for maintaining separate schools and a general social arrangement of separateness: "Physical separation… was necessary to control the Mexican stranger; elaborate social rules were necessary to ensure that Mexicans knew their inferior position in the developing order" (p. 161). Due

to its obvious racial characterization, Montejano (1987) claims that farm society in rural Texas has been described as "castelike." Labov (1987) writes:

> The fundamental problem of American education is racism—beliefs and practices that are motivated by and reinforce the view that one race is superior to others. Its most obvious expression is residential, economic, and educational segregation... Integration within cities and across city lines is required to reduce the isolation of black and Hispanic youth. (p. 144)

Talamante (2000) writes that the role of the school was not to provide the Mexican with a quality education. The opinion of a traveling newspaper correspondent from Mexico reflects this notion:

> As the government of Texas and the other authorities dont interest themselves in enforcing the educational law, the Mexican children almost dont receive any education. They aren't taught hardly anything at the schools…and I have heard many teachers, farmers, and members of a School Board say: 'What do the Mexicans want to study for when they won't be needed as lawyers but should be taught to be good and they are only needed for cotton picking and work on the railroads?' (Gamio, 1989, pp. 222-223)

Mexican Dilemma

Although the Mexican immigrant has survived decades of racism and discrimination, the same attitudes on the part of dominant society continue to surface. In "The Special Case of the Mexican Immigrants," Huntington (2000) describes the "Mexican problem," or immigration, with the following characteristics: Contiguity due to Mexico's close proximity, high numbers of immigrants, illegality, concentration in certain regions of the country, and persistence. In regards to education, Huntington

(2000) writes, "No school system in a major U.S. city has ever experienced such a large influx of students from a single foreign country. The schools of Los Angeles are becoming Mexican" (p. 2).

Similar attitudes are reflected by present-day educators, such as this California superintendent: "We've got to attend to the idea of assimilation and to make sure that we teach English and our values as quickly as we can so these kids [immigrants and other minority groups] can get in the mainstream of American life" (Walsh, 1990, p. Bl-4). Incidentally, at the time the superintendent spoke these words, the dropout rate in his district was at 40% for the Latino population (Matute-Bianchi, 1990). A superintendent in Olsen's (1997) study blatantly remarked: "Fix those immigrants! Do something with them so they are more like us" (p. 159).

These shortsighted statements assume that straight-line assimilation has been successful in the last 140 years and that the immigrants' entrance into the American mainstream has been one of simply replacing one lifestyle for another (Luna, 2002). Furthermore, public opinion, including that of educators, is shaped by such statements, which are then incorporated into patterns of political responsiveness and general ill feeling about low-status groups. Suarez-Orozco (1996) states that the end of the 20th century brings "hysteria" over immigration that has become "one of the great discontents of our civilization" (p. 152). A forthcoming section of the literature review reveals how "resiliency," found in successful Latino immigrants today, is related to some of the arduous experiences, barriers, and losses with which they are confronted and yet overcome.

Ambiguous Loss and Migration

The dilemmas of cultural and family continuity and change increase family resilience in the face of multiple migration losses. However, risks arise when the experience of ambiguous loss becomes unbearable and hinders attempts at integrating progress with change. Although Latinos share many similarities in the aspects of family coping with loss, each family has a particular "ecological niche" created by combinations of nationality, ethnicity, class, education, religion, and occupation and by its individual history. Other factors that play a part in the experience of migration are the degree of choice (voluntary or forced migration), proximity and accessibility to the country of origin, gender, age, and generation, and the degree and level of social acceptance encountered in the new environment (Falicov, 1995, 1998).

Migration represents what Boss (1999) calls a "crossover" in that it has features of both types of ambiguous loss. Family and places are left behind, but they remain keenly present in the psyche of the immigrant. At the same time, homesickness and the stresses of adaptation may leave some family members emotionally unavailable to others. The very decision to migrate has at its foundation two ambiguous poles. Intense frustration with economic or political conditions induces and motivates the immigrant to move, but love of family and surroundings pull in another direction. The following concepts embraces: family systems theory of ambiguous loss, boundary ambiguity, relational resilience with concepts drawn from studies on migration, race, and ethnicity

including familism, biculturalism, double consciousness to deepen our understanding of the risks and resilience that accompany migration loss for Mexican immigrants.

The following are several conflicts and behaviors that deal with the immigrant's ambiguous losses:

Visits to the country of origin close the gap between the immigrant and that which is psychologically present but physically absent. Phone calls, money remittances, gifts, messages, and trips back home contribute to transnational lifestyles and to a psychologically complex experience of presence and absence (Rouse, 1992).

Leaving family members behind has pragmatic and economic justifications, but it may also ensure a powerful psychological link. It may symbolize that migration is provisional and experimental rather than permanent. Leaving a young child with the immigrant's own parents may also assuage the immigrant's guilt about leaving and offer an emotional exchange for the help of shared parenting (Volkan and Zintl, 1993).

Encouraging relatives and friends to migrate eases the wrenching homesickness of migration. It is a way of saying "hello again" to some of the many to whom one has bid good-byes. It also means that social networks dismantled by migration may stand a chance of being partially reconstructed in the host country (Falicov, 1998).

Latino immigrants also reconstruct urban landscapes of open markets and ethnic neighborhoods that provide experiences with familiar foods, music, and language. Recreating cultural spaces in this manner reestablishes links with the lost land, while helping to transform the receiving cultures into more syntonic spaces (Ainslie, 1998).

The long-lasting dream of returning home reinforces the gap between physical absence and psychological presence. A family may remain in a provisional limbo, unable to make settlement decisions or take full advantage of existing opportunities, paralyzed by a sort of frozen grief (Sabogal, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, and Perez-Stable, 1987).

Family polarizations ensue when ambiguities overwhelm, as it were, the immigrant family's psyche. Spouses may come to represent each side of the conflict between leaving and staying, one idealizing and the other denigrating the country of origin or the "new" culture (Sluzki, 1979).

Generation legacies evolve when immigrant parents pass on their doubts, nostalgia, and sense of ambiguities to their children, who are sometimes recruited to one side or the other of the polarizations. Immigrant children may experience ambiguous loss themselves, but exposure to their parents' mixed emotions may significantly increase their stress (Falicov, 1993).

The migration story itself can provide meaning and narrative coherence to all life events (Cohler, 1991).

Experiences of success or of failure, the wife's newfound assertiveness, and the ungrateful adult child-all can be readily explained: "It is because we came here. The question that will remain perennially unanswered: How much is it migration, or is it just life challenges that would have appeared anywhere? (Troya and Rosenberg, 1999).

The construction of bicultural identities may result. The flow of people and information in a two-home, two-country lifestyle may give rise to a sense of "fitting in"

in more than one place. Equally possible is the sense of not belonging in either place (Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989).

These behaviors demonstrate the ambiguous, conflicting nature of migration losses. Simultaneously, they carry with them certain dynamic responses or solutions that demonstrate that people can learn to live with the ambiguity of never putting final closure to their loss (Walsh, 1998). Immigrant families manage to maintain contacts with their culture of origin and to reinvent old family themes while carving out new lives (Bennett, Wolin, and McAvity, 1988). Terms such as binationalism, bilingualism, biculturalism, and cultural bifocality describe dual visions, ways of maintaining familiar cultural practices while making new spaces manageable (Levitt, 1996).

Cultural Links

"They refuse to quietly disappear into the new cultural space. Rather, they weave, with threads borrowed from each other of their two worlds, a new tapestry: a hybrid blending of the two systems of meaning that they struggle to integrate" (Rueschenberg and Buriel, 1989, p. 238). The new cultural spaces that immigrants construct cannot be reduced or entirely contained by either of the cultural traditions in the immigrant's life. Psycho culturally speaking, "La Pulga"—the flea market vividly portrayed by Ainsley (1998), is no more "Mexico" than it is "Austin"(p. 42). Rather, in Ainsley's (1998) technical expression, it is a "restorative" space saturated with new hybrid signs and symbols, facts, and artifacts that mimic the immigrants internal efforts to integrate, physically and culturally, the new and the old (Ainsley, 1998).

In so doing, they have simultaneously reconstructed a lost world and created a vehicle for effective engagement in the new one (Santos, 1999). Although, there are compelling adaptational reasons for acquiring new language and cultural practices, there are equally compelling reasons for retaining cultural themes in the attempt to preserve a sense of family coherence (Harwood, Miller, and Irizarry, 1995).

Although Latinos, like other groups, are divided by factors such as race and color, class, and national origin, the Spanish language generates a powerful gravitational field bringing them together (Bonilla, Melendez, and Torres, 1998). Studies of language maintenance conclude that Latinos, more than any other ethnic group, tend to remain loyal to their native language, with Mexicans being the most committed Spanish speakers (Portes and Rumbaut, 1990). Many factors contribute to the retention of the Spanish language: the critical mass of immigrants who speak the language, frequent visits to home towns and cities, and the interdependence between families living on both sides of the border (Boss, 1991).

Familism

Benard (1997) writes that three characteristics supporting growth and development are consistently found in environmental systems: caring relationships, high expectations, and participation. As noted by Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (1995a), several studies have shown that "familism" is a dominant characteristic of Latino families and perhaps responsible for their enduring strength in dealing with difficult sociocultural circumstances (Romo & Pipes, 2000). Familism may be beneficial to Mexican

adolescents because of its association with dense social networks and hence, opportunities that support academic achievement (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). In her discussion of social capital, Valenzuela (1999) tells how a group of students were encouraged to think about college by family members; this caused the group to envision the possibility of a prosperous future. Low-status groups immersed in these networks can develop effective socialization and coping behaviors that enable them to cross-institutional barriers, exercising their bicultural network orientation (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

The organization of functional networks of families and their friends has been most instrumental to the survival of families during difficult economic times, but it has also served as a very strong emotional support system for retaining a strong Mexican identity in the face of the traumas encountered (Suarez-Orozco, 1995b). Language is only one of the cultural building blocks crucial to any understanding of Latino identities. Latinos also tend to share cultural models, social practices, and religious sensibilities that shape and give meaning to their lives (Gutierrez, 1995). Hence, there are several special considerations in working with Latino immigrants. Several factors have been identified as contributing to resilience. Individual characteristics of resilience in immigrants include optimism, self-efficacy, a sense of mastery, a sense of coherence, and hardiness (Butler, Hobfoll, & Keane, 2003). However, for Latino immigrants, resilience is as much based in one's sense of connectivity, including social ties, belief systems and community supports (Dudley-Grant, Melendez, & Zinn, 2000) as it is in any particular individual characteristic. While social connectedness is seen as one aspect of resilience in the

general population (Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt, & Target, 1994), the primacy of the individual is still maintained as the basic value in the American value system.

Traditional Latino Immigrant Cultural Values and Beliefs

Immigration continues to alter the demographic landscape of the United States. Schools have been especially affected by Latino immigration. The impact of this population poses particular challenges to U.S. adult schools. Yet, we still have much to learn about the immigrants' needs. One area of interest to this study is families' educational values, goals, beliefs, and aspirations related to learning and achievement. Research suggests that differences, or discontinuities, between the educational values and beliefs of immigrants, Latinos in particular, and the values and beliefs needed for success in U.S. schools are responsible for the low levels of academic achievement among adult students (Michel, 2002). Fix and Passel (1994) cites discontinuities in values or beliefs between immigrant Latino families and schools. He goes on to interpret these discontinuities within a framework of cultural differences not deficiencies. On the other hand, research by Olatunji (2000) suggests that immigrants of Mexican descent who engage in early work experience lowered self-esteem, increases delinquency, and stymies educational attainment, "…thus Latinos develop attitudes and values that are dysfunctional for optimal educational achievement" (p. 87). These perspectives, different as they are, have at least one thing in common. They attribute the difficulties immigrant Latinos have in U.S. schools to discrepancies, or discontinuities, between family values and beliefs about schooling and the values and beliefs assumed to be important for school

success in this country—high aspirations for educational attainment and a belief in the value of formal schooling for future success and well-being.

But are the educational values and beliefs of immigrant Latino families entirely different than mainstream U.S. values and beliefs, those presumably espoused by the schools and necessary for school success? Despite differences in cultures and outlook, there is evidence of considerable commonality between values and beliefs of immigrant Latino and those of educators in our schools. Moreover, and despite clear attempts to maintain links with their native cultures, there is evidence of self-conscious attempts by Latino immigrants to move away from the educational values espoused by their parents and provide greater educational opportunities for their children, and themselves, than they felt were provided to them (Michel, 2002).

Cultural Models, Values, and Beliefs in Education

The focus here is Latino immigrants' cultural models of learning and their education-related values, beliefs, and actions (Goldenberg, 1987, 1988, 1989; Goldenberg, Reese, & Gallimore, 1992; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995). It is often presumed that, like all cultural models (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992), those that guide family management of learning and education represent a complex set of assumptions and dispositions. Values and beliefs encoded in cultural models do not necessarily appear to others as internally consistent, nor does it relate to behavior. Similarly, endorsing and talking about a cultural model for learning and education does not always translate into actions that might be predicted by a superficial analysis.

Knowing which beliefs in immigrants model of learning and education are linked to action which provides a basis for designing programs that are more sensitively fitted to the culture and more likely to work effectively (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992).

Latino Attitudes

Goldenberg, Reese, and Gallimore (1992) identify two paradoxical themes in a longitudinal study about Latinos. One theme is discontinuity across generations and cultures; the other is continuity across generations and cultures. In some important respects, the beliefs and attitudes of the immigrant families do differ from that of the schools they attend. These differences are important. Differences in beliefs and attitudes and differences between how immigrants are socialized and taught at school can interfere with students' school adaptation and performance (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Jacob & Jordan, 1991). However, in equally important respects, there can be common features across school and family cultures. These commonalities are perhaps just as important, since they offer potential avenues for cooperation and mutual benefit.

Similarly, the families represent important continuities with traditional features, including values and attitudes of their native cultures. Nevertheless, there are also important discontinuities, sometimes even self-conscious attempts to break with the past and with the values and attitudes of the older generation in the native country. Both continuity and discontinuity across generations are part of the process of cultural evolution, a complex dynamic that contributes to change and variability within cultures (Chibnik, 1981). These paradoxes, continuity and discontinuity across cultures and

generations, will defy attempts to reach simplistic conclusions about cultural models and the role it plays in adult immigrants schooling and achievement.

Latino's Beliefs and Values

Studying the cultural models of immigrant Latinos is relevant to the research as to whether beliefs and values underpinning family actions provide a foundation for productive educational collaborations that could help students succeed in school. Such a foundation has been uncovered by more than a decade of longitudinal research with Latino families, (Lucas, Henze, & Donate, 1990). This research indicates:

1. Immigrant families from Mexico and Central America express a deep and abiding belief in formal education as a means toward social and economic mobility and stability.
2. Immigrant Latino parents want to be involved in their children's schooling, and they express considerable satisfaction when teachers make efforts to involve them in children's academic development; the possibility of productive home-school collaboration for this population of students is therefore considerable.
3. Parents' views of what education—in Spanish "*educacion*"—comprises is much broader than formal schooling; it includes moral development and familial responsibility.
4. Although parents greatly value academic development, in general, and literacy development, in particular, children of immigrant families from Mexico and

Central America typically have relatively few experiences at home that promote text-based literacy development as it is defined in school.

The research also indicates that the foundation of these beliefs and values is the immigrants' conception of *educacion*, (well schooled) but also which emphasizes civic behavior, being "well educated" (*bien educado*), as well. Immigrants see good and proper behavior as the basis for academic and cognitive advance. This emphasis among Latino immigrants on comportment and the educational institutions emphasis on academic learning complement, rather than conflict with each other is one of the fundamental values toward education.

Education Paradox

Often immigrants have ignored pre-school academic opportunities in the home partially because literacy is not a fundamental activity for most families' economic activities. This translates into a relative scarcity of text-based literacy experiences for students and other members of the family before they begin school. This leads to a fundamental discontinuity between schools and immigrant Latino homes (Michel, 2000). Although literacy is not completely absent—families write and receive letters; ads, printed matter, and environmental print is often present; parents and older siblings do read, particularly if they are in school—there is relatively little emphasis on book literacy (Michel, 2000).

The Latino immigrants' cultural models related to schooling and achievement thus present a mixed picture. On the one hand, values and practices exist that are at least

complementary and at best fully compatible (even congruent) with school values. On the other hand, there are clear differences (Michel, 2000). In much of the current literature, there is a tendency for observers to feature the differences as the principal issue and to take one of three positions. Olatunji (2000) argues that success in U.S. schools will come only as immigrant families leave behind their "different" values that were adaptive in more traditional, non-technological contexts and adopt those of the academic occupational model (p. 198). Others argue that for these individuals to succeed, schools must accommodate the differences in values, teaming styles, and home experiences (Trueba, 1983; Harris, 1988; Cohen, 1988). Yet, others contend that the lack of opportunity in the U.S. means that Latinos and other disenfranchised groups will inevitably devalue formal schooling as an avenue for social and economic mobility (Wyman, 1993; Crawford, 1992).

Immigration Experience and Success

Although immigrant students are commonly perceived first and foremost as learners of English, a host of other interrelated factors play a part in the educational paths immigrant students take, their progress on those paths, and the outcome of the journey. Knowledge of these contributing factors forms the foundation upon which to build approaches that will assist immigrant students as whole people making their way into, through, and beyond school in the United States. Without this knowledge, we are certain to ignore or minimize many of these critical influences. Some of them characterize individual students and their families, some characterize the relationship between their

native country and culture and the U.S., others characterize the immigrant experience and still others the particular context within the U.S. into which students immigrate and where they attend school (Suarez-Orozco, 2000).

Factors such as the economic resources of a family and the economic resources of a community, the educational backgrounds of individual students and educational backgrounds of their family members, the age of arrival in the U.S., English proficiency, and educational background are intricately tied to the immigrant experience (Michel, 2002). These factors can have a critical impact on the adjustment of immigrants to the United States institutions and culture and on their success through the transitions and adjustment to their new country. Some of them can have either positive or negative impacts depending upon a variety of other, interrelated factors.

Personal strengths and individual resilience plays a significant role in immigrants' adaptation to American society. The emphasis on the obstacles encountered by immigrants generally leads to the perception that their lives are inundated with problems. However, some come from economically comfortable families and have completed rigorous educational programs. Even those who have lived through trauma and hardship may have developed personal strengths and maturity that will see them through the adjustment to a new culture quite successfully. While immigrants do face many challenges, many of them meet the challenges and ultimately overcome them through their own strengths, optimism, and resources (Michel, 2002).

Educational Challenges

The strength of an immigrant's educational background plays a crucial role in their success in the U.S.

> Students who have attended school full time in their native countries are often ahead of American students, especially in mathematics and science. However, students whose schooling was delayed or disrupted due to poverty and war are often far behind. (McDonnell & Hill, 1993, p.70)

Challenging, responsive, and supportive educational experiences can help students catch up. Unfortunately, most immigrant students attend urban schools that lack the human and fiscal resources to educate students well, whether they are immigrant or native-born (McDonnell & Hill, 1993, p. xii). The lack of resources limits the time and energy available in poor urban schools to reform practice so that it reflects current approaches to student-centered learning.

Overall, indications are that the quality of education provided specifically for immigrant students also falls short of what is needed. This is characterized by a number of variables including a shortage of teachers qualified to teach LEP students, a shortage of instructional and assessment materials appropriate for immigrant students, ineffective strategies for immigrant student outreach, and inadequate support services.

This is not to say that all immigrant students suffer from these general shortcomings in the system. Those fortunate enough to be enrolled in schools with strong educational programs and qualified, experienced staff have access to educational foundations that support their learning and their successful movement through the educational system (Chang, 1990).

The one factor that is universally recognized as central to the educational success of immigrant students is their degree of proficiency in English (McDonnell & Hill, 1993). Since English is the primary language of the United States, immigrants must become proficient in order to fully participate in the U.S. labor force, civic life, and education. Age of arrival, educational background, and attainment of English proficiency are collectively interrelated in ways that are especially relevant to secondary-age immigrants:

> Few teenage immigrants who enter U.S. schools with deficient academic preparation ever make the transition to full-time English language instruction, and many leave school without diplomas and several years below normal grade levels. (McDonnell & Hill, 1993, p. 70)

Secondary school age immigrants face a more difficult task in learning a second language than their younger peers. They are expected to read dense textbooks and to learn complex subject matter requiring a more sophisticated grasp of language and concepts than elementary students. Because of the general lack of native language instruction at the secondary level, those who are not proficient in English usually find themselves in remedial courses even when their grasp of content in their native language is advanced. This practice impedes their educational progress and does not allow them to prepare adequately for university enrollment (McDonnell & Hill, 1993).

Immigrant Educational Issues

Immigrants come to the U.S. mainly for one of two reasons: (1) To seek better economic and educational opportunities for themselves and their families, or (2) Because they are fleeing political turmoil, war and extreme economic hardship in their own

countries (Olsen, 1988, p. 18). Others immigrate because the United States has taken over their countries as in the case of Puerto Ricans and the people of Guam and the Marianas. This was also the case in the Philippines for half a century. Those in the first group, who come to the U.S. voluntarily, tend to:

> …interpret the economic, political and social barriers against them as more or less temporary problems, as problems they will or can overcome with the passage of time, hard work, or more education. (Ogbu, 1991, p. 11)

Race and ethnicity also have a profound impact on the lives of people in the United States. Typically, non-Europeans face discrimination in this country. The different group bearing African heritage (including Haitians) suffer the double prejudice that results form their dual status as immigrants and as people with darker skin.

The stereotype of Asians as the "model minority" carries the burden of assuming that all Asians are alike (even groups as different as Hmong and Koreans) and that they need very little support to be successful in U.S. schools and society. Anti-immigrant feelings and actions are targeted primarily at those who are not of European background, thus confounding the prejudice based on race and on immigration status. While there is some evidence that immigrants respond in more beneficial ways to such prejudice than do U.S.-born minorities (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991), these experiences increase the difficulty of the challenges that immigrants face in their adjustment to their new lives in the U.S.

Prejudice against immigrants in general has increased in recent years and undocumented immigrants are special targets. States like California and Florida, which have large numbers of immigrants, have tended to blame illegal immigrants for their

economic problems. The passage of Proposition 187 in California in 1994, denies education, health care, and other services to undocumented immigrants, and increases fears of deportation among immigrants. While specific provisions of Proposition 187 have been declared unconstitutional, the worries of undocumented immigrants no doubt continue to have an impact on adult immigrants' participation in and engagement with education.

During the adjustment to a new country and culture, immigrants need community support. Many families provide the love and assurance that is needed to help young people develop a sense of security and confidence, even when they do not understand the people around them and they are misunderstood in return. However, the nature of the immigrant experience itself can promote increased distance between children and their parents. In many immigrant families, the responses of older and younger immigrants to the differences between native cultures and U.S. culture lead to intergenerational conflict.

> There is an increasing sense of separation between the parents and the children. Where the parents are still having some trouble adjusting to the culture, to the language, the students themselves are moving ahead, which sometimes includes losing their sense of their roots. There's a clash in terms of the language, the values, the backgrounds. (Carlos Cordova, quoted in Olsen, 1988, p. 31)

One individual characteristic that can lead to intergenerational conflict is gender. The expectations of men and women vary radically from culture to culture, with few cultures offering as much equality and freedom to women and as much flexibility in roles to men. The different assumptions about appropriate and desirable aspirations for boys

and girls can cause tensions among adolescent immigrants and between them and the more traditional adults in their families (Suarez-Orozco, 1991).

Family Connectedness

The extent to which an immigrant family member has personal skills and strengths can have a profound effect on the family. Can the adults in the family negotiate within their new context successfully? Can they adapt skills and knowledge from their previous experiences to their new life? Can they provide care and a sense of security for their children? Can they overcome obstacles in productive ways? These factors help to determine immigrants' adjustment to their new lives and school contexts.

Many immigrant families do have such skills and strengths. Contrary to stereotypes of immigrants as drains on the economic and social service systems, many have virtually achieved the same average household incomes as natives (Fix & Passel, 1994). They also contribute substantially to the U.S. economy, and create more jobs than they themselves fill (Fix, Zimmerman, & Passel, 2001). By generating significantly more in taxes paid than they cost in services received they contribute more to the U.S. economy (Fix, et al., 2001). Equally important, immigrants of working age are considerably less likely than natives to receive welfare, although they are more likely than natives to have very low educational attainment and are also more likely than natives not to have advanced degrees (Fix, et.al., 2001).

Immigration is a transitional experience that poses difficulties. Whether immigrants are documented or undocumented, whether they have chosen to immigrate to

the U.S. or have been forced to do so by circumstances in their native countries, whether or not they have left family members behind, their lives are disrupted. They must leave friends, relatives, familiar places, and routines for the uncertainty of a new life. This transition influences the emotional state of immigrants, which in turn can interfere with their concentration and learning at school. In this context, undocumented male Mexican immigrants face a serious challenge in adjusting to U.S. schools, where the focus is on "learning the content itself" rather than on "creating connections between students and teachers to nurture learning" (Wheelock, 1993, p. 16). Mexican immigrants are obligated to persevere in overcoming these old but traditional and social cultural ingrained obstacles. These issues will be addressed in the subsequent historical context. In the following paragraph, ambiguous immigration experiences of the ten Mexican immigrants under study will demonstrate how their unique characteristics have affected their resiliency and success in migrating to the United States to pursue happiness in life and a higher education.

Mexican Immigration to the United States

Out of all the Latino groups present in the United States today, Mexican immigrants have had the longest history of immigration and presence within the U.S. The relationship between Mexico and the U.S. over the last 150 years has shaped the immigration flow from Mexico and the status of Mexicans within the U.S. From the turn of the century, the U.S. has always looked south of its border to fulfill its ever-present desire for cheap labor. With such close proximity to their home country, Mexicans who

are presently a minority are quickly changing the face of United States demographics. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000) confirms that Hispanics are the youngest, largest, and fastest growing minority in the United States. Additionally, numerous Mexican nationals immigrate annually to this country in search of better economic and educational opportunities for their families (Jones, 1995). This influx of Mexican immigrants leaves their native country with its familiar surroundings, uproot their loved ones, and travel north to live with friends or relatives who have secured employment for them (Massey, Alarcon, Durand, & Gonzalez, 1987). Over the 20 years, Mexico has remained the country of origin for the majority of immigrants coming to the United States (Broeder & Extra, 1999). An estimated 4.3 million Mexican citizens have immigrated to the United States (U.S.) since 1981 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). This very conservative figure does not include the thousands of undocumented aliens who reside within our borders and send their children to American public schools (Olsen, 1988; Valdes, 2001). This pattern of migration will continue with the presence of Mexican immigrant families that will present a formidable challenge to our educational and economic establishments (Garcia, 1991; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Public institutions, more than any other organizations, remain at the epicenter of this change, and educators are on the frontline in determining how to respond to student needs (Noguera, 1999).

> [O]ne third of Hispanics...and two thirds of immigrant students drop out of school. Confronted with this dismal reality, administrators, teachers, parents and policy makers urge each other to do something different - change teaching methods, adopt new curricula, allocate more funding. Such actions might be needed, but will be meaningless unless we begin to think differently about these students. In order to educate them, we must

first educate ourselves about who they are and what they need to succeed. (LeBlanc-Flores, 1996, p. iii)

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ethnography literally means "a portrait of a people." Ethnography is a written description of a particular culture-the customs, beliefs, and behavior-based on information collected through fieldwork.

—Marvin Harris and Orna Johnson, 2000

Introduction

The framework of the literature provides the following criteria: (1) a thorough review of research on the socialization of male Mexican immigrant students in institutions, and (2) a foundation for the selection of a theoretical framework which will guide both the collection and analysis of field data.

This chapter will describe the uses and purposes of qualitative methods. Individual interviews will represent the qualitative methods applied by this study to address factors influencing male Mexican immigrants as they demonstrate their resiliency to effectively confront and successfully navigate into a higher education institution in Central Texas. Furthermore, this chapter will consist of the following sections: a description of qualitative methods, the settings, preliminary resource identification, data collection, data analysis, and chapter summary.

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative or ethnographic methodology has been used extensively in sociological and anthropological field studies, which usually are considered explanatory in nature. Filstead (1970) has noted:

> Qualitative methodology refers to those research strategies such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, total participation in the activity being investigated, and field work which allow the researcher to obtain first-hand knowledge about the empirical world in question. Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to "get close to his data," thereby developing the analytical, conceptual, and categorical components of explanation for the data itself. (p. 6)

In his study of Mexican-American middle-level administrators in Texas colleges and universities, Acevedo (1979) made extensive use of qualitative methodology to guide his theoretical framework, to identify his research sample, to guide his data collection, and to analyze the field data. His study was one of the first at The University of Texas at Austin to make use of this methodology to study the phenomenon of an ethnic population undergoing a socialization experience in an educational environment.

The use of qualitative methodology provides a strong theoretical framework for the collection and analysis of the field data. Acevedo (1979) refers to the theoretical framework as the map by which data were collected and analyzed. He agrees with Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) that a theory will not tell the researcher what will be found but rather what and where to look for in the natural environment. The researcher who uses qualitative methodologies is not out to prove anything but rather to describe events in an environment that can be used to generate hypotheses for future study (Acevedo, 1979).

The belief and consistency to a theoretical foundation serves the standardized process by which the data is gathered and then examined. Wilson (1977) illustrates that:

> Educational researchers who are unfamiliar with the anthropological research tradition often see this kind of research as synonymous with journalistic reporting and anecdotal or impressionistic story telling. Their expectation is that someone enters a setting, looks around for a time, talks to some people, and writes a report of his impressions. They speculate that any person in the setting could produce the same insights by writing down some recollections. They do not see it as real research and fear a lack of objectivity. (p. 254)

Qualitative methodology is as orderly as any other kind of "legitimate" research. Erickson (1977) highlights this issue:

> Specification of data collection strategies while in the field presupposes a conscious theoretical orientation by the researcher—a conscious awareness of one's commitment to points of views derived from substantive theory in social science and from personal theory. Focus data collection also requires knowing something about the setting one is studying through information gathered before entering the setting as well as from firsthand experience. This point is made strongly by Hammel, who in speaking to anthropologists in particular, says that in the study of complex modern society it is not useful as a research strategy to pretend to know nothing in advance about the setting one is studying. (p. 62)

Wilson (1977) agrees with Erickson when annotating:

> Those who work with this tradition assert that the social scientist cannot understand human behavior without understanding the framework within which the subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings, and action. (p. 249)

Qualitative research generally reports in very rich, detailed information, which helps to gain a deeper understanding of the user experience. Another advantage is that qualitative methods do not shape and constrain participant's responses in the way that questionnaires do, but allows them to choose their own answers, using their own

language and terminology. The essence of a hypothetical structure as the support for any area of study is also highlighted by Agyris (1960), Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) and Glaser and Strauss (1967). Agyris (1960) argues a requirement for "…a theoretical framework which defines some of the relevant variables and their relationships" (p.7). Lutze and Iannnaccone (1969) recommend the requirement for a theoretical ground for an area of study:

> The data gathered through the field study may be analyzed by concepts and theories from political science, cultural anthropology, sociology, social psychology, economic or psychology. The careful exploration of the plausible theories that may explain the data collected is just as essential a first step for the field study as it is for the experimental study. (p. 132)

> Theory provides a means of knowing where to look and how to look. It provides statements that predict but are not yet confirmed. This is, again, not unlike the experimental researcher. For the field researcher, however, the statements generated from the theory are more general and subject to modification as he collects data rather that only after the data has been analyzed. (p. 133)

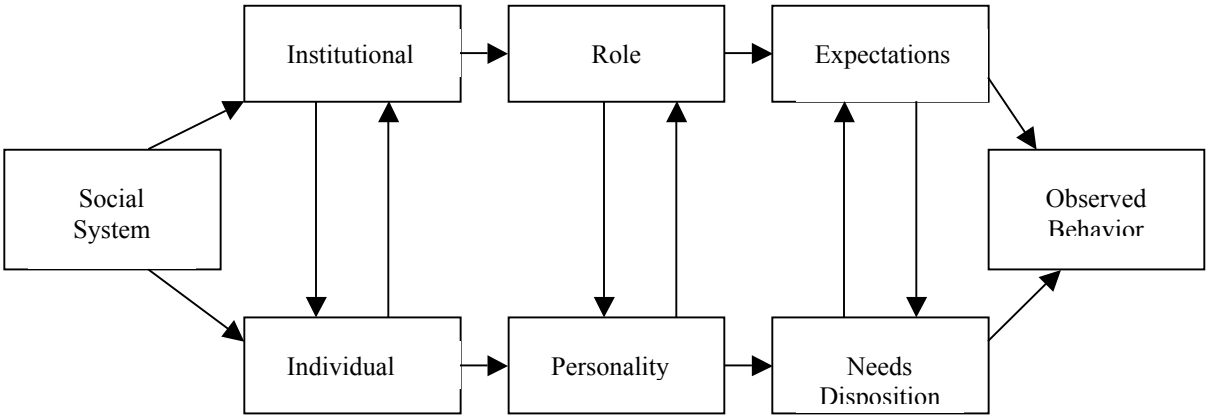
Organizational Socialization:
Theoretical and Conceptual Dimensions

The literature highlights two particular dimensions as existing in the environmental structure where social interactions occur between an individual and any organization. These dimensions are the individual and the institution. Getzels and Guba (1957) treated these dimensions in their theoretical construct, which addresses the issue of social behavior of the individual and its relation to the education attainment process in a complex social system such as a higher educational organization.

Figure 1

Social Behavior Model

Nomothetic Dimension



Idiographic Dimension

Source: Getzels, Jacob W. & Guba, Egon, C. Social Behavior and the Administrative Process. The School Review. Vol. 65, Winter, 1957.

In Guba and Getzels model (Figure 1), the plight between institutional role expectations (the nomothetic dimension) and the individual needs dispositions (the idiographic dimension) is created. Education attainment is described as a social process in which behavior is understood as a function of both the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions of the social system.

The idiographic dimension entails of the individual, his personality, and his needs of disposition. The nomothetic dimension includes the institution, its roles, and its expectations. The correlation of these two dimensions derives in social behavior which Getzels (1957) says, "…results as the individual attempts to cope with an environment

composed of pattern of expectations for his behavior in ways consistent with his own independent pattern of need" (p. 429).

While analyzing the nomothetic dimensions of the Getzels-Guba (1957) model, one can find the elements upon which socialization standards are based and directed toward. These elements are the institution, its roles and its expectations (Acevedo, 1979). Getzels and Guba (1057) state, "the most important subunit of the institution is the role. Roles are the structural elements defining the behavior of the role incumbent or actors" (p.26). The ensuing comments are formulated to depict the nature of roles:

1. They represent positions, offices or statuses within the institution.
2. They are defined in terms of the role expectations when the role incumbent puts these obligations and responsibilities into effect, he is said to be performing his role.
3. They are complementary. They are inter-dependents in that their meaning is derived from other related roles in the institution.
4. A role is a prescription not only for the given role incumbent but also for the other role incumbents within the organization (Getzels and Guba, 1957).

These are the main considerations to which socialization processes are directed, and the overriding objective of the process is to alter the individual's perspectives about himself so that he fits into prescribed roles with their expectant behavior patterns and values.

While the institution has certain expectations of its participants, so do the individuals who compile the ideographic dimensions of the organization. Getzels (1957)

states that it is necessary to consider the individualizing aspects of social behavior, the idiographic element. The roles of an organization are occupied by individuals, and it is their personality which Getzels (1957) views as being the counterpart to the roles of the institution. He defines personality "as the dynamic organization within the individual of those needs dispositions that govern his unique reactions to the environment" (p.154).

After observing the role and needs disposition dimensions of the Getzels-Guba model, Abbot (1965) comments:

> The acquisition of an individual's role definition is largely a socialization process through which an individual learns from others the nature of institutional roles…During the socialization period each individual arrives at his own version of the idealized set of requirements which are attached to the positions or statuses found within a formal organization. Socialization involves essentially a transactional process in which there is a dynamic interaction of the individual needs dispositions and the institutional role definitions. (p. 6)

This model also serves as a beacon to the identification of any role conflict, which may be evident as the individual's values and beliefs differ with those of the organization.

Wight Bakke (1953) has also presented a conceptual framework, which takes into consideration both the individual and institutional elements of socialization. He refers to the process by which these elements interact as the Fusion Process (Figure 2) and describes the process as such:

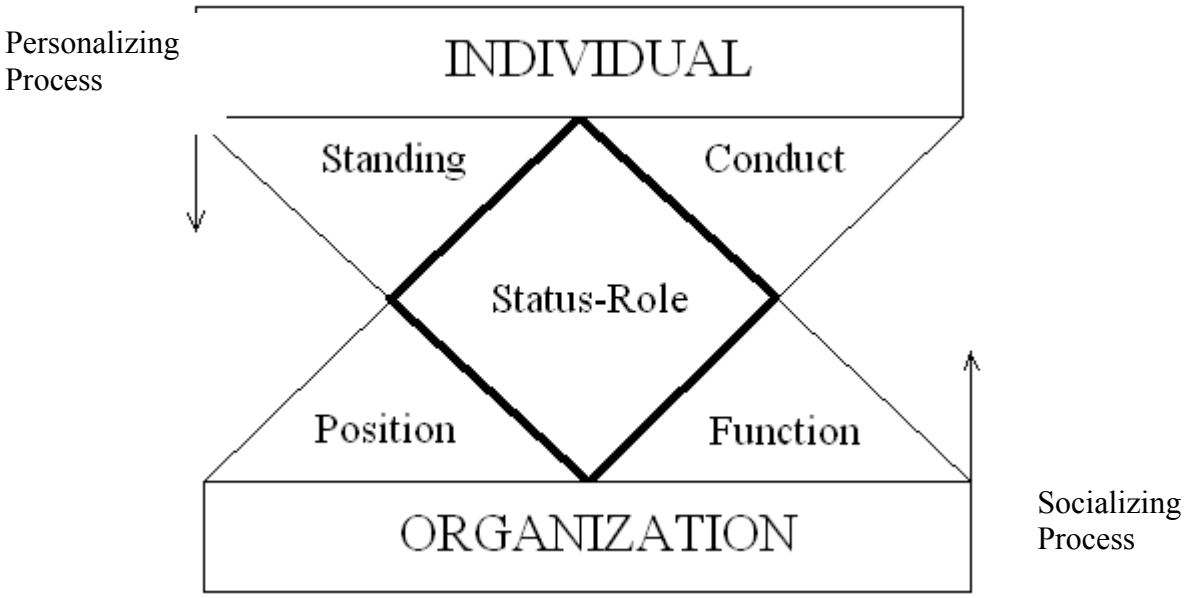
> When an individual and an organization come together in such a way that the individual is a participant in, and a member of the organization and the two are mutually dependent on each other, both are reconstructed in the process. The organization to some degree remakes the individual and the individual to some degree remakes the organization…It follows that the organization (through its agents) will attempt to impress its pattern upon

the individual and to make of him an agent for the realization of its organizational processes. Likewise it follows, from the generalization that the individual tends to maintain and express his own concept of his whole self, his personality, that he will attempt to impress his patterns upon the organization and make of it (including its resources, materials, ideas, and people) an agency for the realization of his personal purposes. We may label the first process the Socializing Process and the second we may label the Personalizing Process. The simultaneous operation of these two we label the Fusion Process. (p. 12)

Figure 2

The Fusion Process Model

The Fusion Process



Source: Bakke, Wight E. The Fusion Process. New Haven, Connecticut: Labor and Management Center, Yale University Press, 1953.

In the Fusion Process there is always an ongoing conflict between the two interacting dimensions. Bakke notes:

the standing and conduct (status and behavior respectively) of the individual never gets through to the organization in pure form because it

> meets head on, as it were, the socializing process attempting to make an organizational and group agent of the individual by assigning him to, and expecting him to behave within a particular position and function. (p. 19)

By the same token, Bakke is quick to emphasize:

> the socializing process never gets through to the individual in the way intended because it meets head on, as it were with the personalizing process attempting to make the organization, groups, and their resources agencies for the actualization of the individual's self-conception. (p. 19)

Both Bakke (1953) and Getzels (1957) take into account the impact of reference groups and institutional role expectations on the development and adjustment of the individual to the demands of the organization. Getzels and Guba (1957) state, "when an individual performs up to role expectations, we may say that he is adjusted to the role" (p. 43). This adjustment to roles, in essence, is what socialization processes are directed at by the organization. Rosow (1965) has been previously quoted as addressing this same purpose and direction for the socialization activities of the organization.

The conflicts which arise between the individual and the organization are a result of different perspectives held by the individual and the reference groups with which he interacts in regard to the role. The role and reference group function in organizations has also been addressed by Cartwright and Zander (1968) and Dewhirst (1972).

In the socialization literature, the reference group is referred to as the significant other(s). Commenting on this element of socialization, Brim (1966) states:

> We can say that the individual learns the behavior appropriate to his position in a group through interaction with others who hold normative beliefs about what his role should be, and who will reward or punish him for correct or incorrect actions. Thus, common knowledge of other's expectations is indispensable in that the person must be able to predict

> how others will react to him to guide his own performance successfully…A major component of socialization involves learning the "role of the other" that is, trying to anticipate the other's response to one's own behavior and reflecting upon one's own performance and appraising one's behavior as good or bad. (p. 9)

Biddle and Thomas (1966) share a similar belief about the relationship between roles and the perspectives of reference groups. They noted:

> [I]ndividuals in society occupy positions and their role performance in those positions is determined by social norms, demands and values; by the performance of others in their respective positions; by those who observe and react to the performance; and by the individual's particular capabilities and personality. (p. 4)

By utilizing these two conceptual schemes, the researcher recognizes the importance of outlining the cultural and ethnic perspectives of the target research population. There are several components, such as referent groups, role perspectives, social norms in organizations, and value systems that must be taken into account from the point of view of an ethnic minority group, respectively, as this group undergoes in dynamic socialization activities in complex organizations. The participants of this study were chosen because it was believed that they were involved in such a process, and their experiences could be described through the utilization of these conceptual models.

Max Abbot (1965) has presented a conceptual scheme (Figure 3) that offers an extension of certain consideration to the Getzels-Guba model and which also presents certain intervening variables which can be examined as impacting the individual's perspectives on the socialization process in an organization. Abbott cites:

> [A]s specific individuals, with their own patterns of relevant needs, are socialized with respect to the organization's codified behavior system,

> they achieve a cognitive orientation to roles and respond affectively to this orientation. (p. 12)

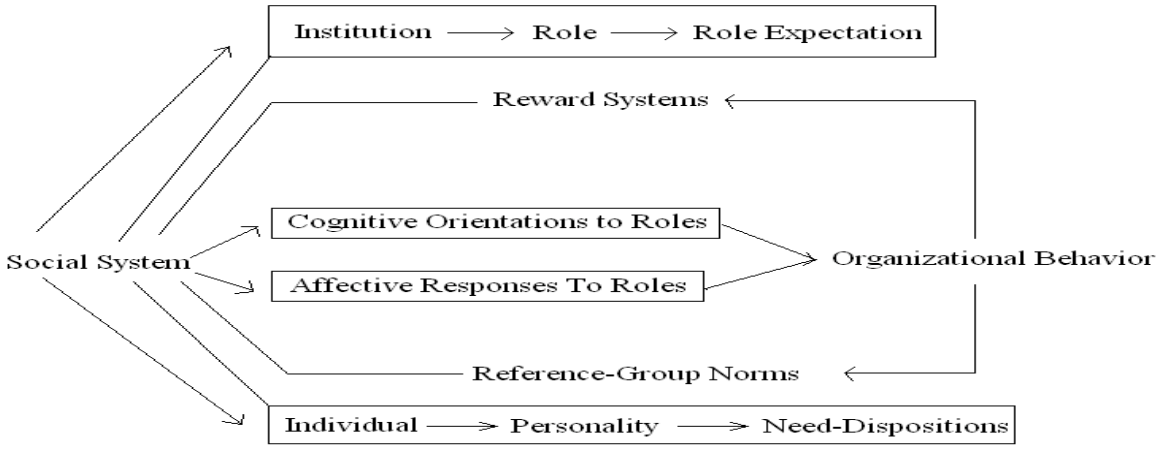
Thus, behavior in a formal organization is originally created simultaneously from an individual's cognitive orientation to roles and his affective responses to roles (Acevedo, 1979).

Abbott describes the social behavior, which Getzels-Guba understood as resulting from the interaction of the nomothetic and idiographic variables, as a perceptual process, which is the individual's cognitive orientation to roles. He further explains:

> [A]n individual's cognitive orientation defines for him the position that he occupies, the way that he is expected to relate to the incumbents of complementary positions and the behaviors that are prescribed and proscribed by the organization. (p. 7)

In Abbott's scheme, there is an offsetting consideration to the cognitive orientation to roles and this is the affective response to roles. These affective response variables result as the individual develops feelings and attitudes regarding the position toward which he is being informed. Abbott affirms that the affective responses to roles, "encompasses that class of phenomena which generally is referred to as motivation" (p. 8).

Figure 3
Intervening Variables in Organizational Behavior Model
General model of the intervening variables in organizational behavior.



Source: Abbott, Max. Intervening Variables in Organizational Behavior. <u>*Educational Administration Quarterly.*</u> *Winter, 1965.*

Abbott's scheme delivered an important function as groundwork for further exploration of the dynamics between the nomothetic and idiographic variables and their effect on the socialization of the male Mexican American student. The intervening variables, which Abbott presented, assisted the researcher in directing his interview questions and discovering those elements which motivate the male Mexican American immigrant student as he interacts with the dynamic components of the organization in which he attends. The extent of congruence or incongruence between the cognitive orientation and the affective response to roles will determine the individual's degree of socialization, which will be demonstrated by his organizational behavior.

Theoretical Framework

The fundamental purpose of this study was to discover and describe the experiences and characteristics of selective male Mexican immigrant students as they struggle to navigate into the assimilation process of higher education. Three models that address and clarify the dimensions and processes of socialization in complex organizations have been previously demonstrated. These conceptual models were: the Getzels-Guba Social Behavior Model; Bakke's Fusion Process Model; and Abbott's Intervening Variables in Organizational Behavior Model.

The importance of theoretical models, which form the conceptual framework for any field study, is highlighted by Agyris (1960), Lutz and Iannaccone (1969), and Glaser and Strauss (1967). All of these authors unite to the principle that the field researcher must have a theoretical framework for understanding the phenomena under consideration. Agyris (1960) argues that organizational behavior implies a need for "…a theoretical framework which defines some of the relevant variables and their interrelationships" (p. 7).

Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) imply that the theoretical framework will not necessarily tell the researcher will be found, instead it provides a means of awareness to look and how to look. It also provides statements that predict but are not yet confirmed. Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) express:

> [I]s not unlike the experimental researcher. For the field researcher, however, the statements generated by the theory are more general and subject to modification as he collects data rather than only after the data has been analyzed. (p. 133)

With these perspectives and recommendations, the previously mentioned theoretical models were utilized as guides to the collection and analysis of data by which descriptions and illustrations of the socialization processes under investigation would be created.

A final note on the importance, purpose, and function of a theory base in qualitative methodology is provided by Erickson (1977):

> Focused data collection strategies are incompatible with the "hypertypical" view of the field research process in which one begins atheoretically with no prior conceptions about the setting, then 'hangs around letting the setting tell you what's going on,' and finally decides what the problems were after returning from the field. Systematic strategies would seem to leave too little room for intuition and happenstance, for the unmediated richness of field experience. Certainly, there is a danger that focused data collection can freeze the research process prematurely. But greater danger lies in adopting the hypertypical view of field research as highly spontaneous, for I think this view is based on a wrong-headed interpretation of what actually happens in the field. No setting, I would argue, 'tells' anybody anything; no questions are generated directly from experience—there are no pure inductions. Research questions come from interaction between experience and some kind of theory, substantive or personal. It is extremely important that qualitative researchers make their interaction as explicit as possible both to their audience in reporting and to themselves while in the field. In no other way can qualitative researcher cumulate knowledge, and in no other way can they avoid a 'credibility gap' with other social scientists. (p. 62)

Lutz and Ramsey (1974) illuminate another feature of qualitative research when they argue that "in educational research we tend to test hypotheses instead of developing them" (p. 5). They go on to discuss on this feature of qualitative methodology as it relates to the theory base that makes it a systematic research endeavor:

> The development of hypotheses is the special province of the anthropological field method. As such, one does not begin with a hypothesis in a field study but rather with tentative assumptions about the

> phenomena being studied. These statements are formulated from social/anthropological theories that purport to explain group, social system, and cultural behavior. They serve as guides to the researcher who is not wed to them or predisposed to prove them. They explicate relationships that might exist and thus direct first efforts at data collection in the field. As data are gathered these assumptions are refined, checked, rechecked, and the statements refined to correspond with the empirical fact. (p. 8)

Another aspect of qualitative methodology is the flexibility, that it provides the field researcher, to get close to the participants in their environment which is fundamental to an understanding of their experiences. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) state that if a researcher is seeking to focus on attitudes and behavior of individuals, it is necessary for "the researcher to get close to the people who he studies" (p. 4); understanding that their actions are best recognized where they live. A dialogue with persons in their natural setting will reveal the implications of meaning from which their perspectives and definitions are continually reinforced.

Wilson (1974) has commented:

> The underlying principle of this kind of researcher is the assumption that individuals have meaning structures that determine much of their behavior. The researcher seeks to discover what these meaning structures are, how they develop, and how they influence behavior, in a fashion as comprehensive and objective as possible. (p. 254)

A final comment on the importance of studying human behavior in its natural environment is made by Wilson (1974):

> Human behavior is complexly influenced by the context in which it occurs. Any research which takes the action out of the naturalistic setting may negate those factors and hence obscure its own understanding. Human behavior has more meaning than its observable facts. (p. 253)

In summary it can be seen that the qualitative/ethnographic research methodology requires that there be a strong grounding in theory, which the field researcher uses in both his data collection and analysis (Acevedo, 1979). This methodology has been recommended by Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) for studying human behavior in complex organizations. Hooper (1974) also made use of this methodology in her ethnography of police cadet socialization, and Agyris (1960) proposes the field research approach for studying organizational behavior. Daniel Griffith (1959) stresses the need for more studies utilizing field description methodology in education. He urges a movement from purely experimental approaches to problems in education and a direction toward observational and descriptive studies. Griffith (1959) notes, "this method is a proven one and educational administration is long overdue in its use" (p. 35).

What follows is a description of the procedures involved in qualitative methodology, which were undertaken by the researcher, to both collect and analyze the field data. The main topics that will be addressed in the following sections are:

1. the setting,
2. preliminary resource identification,
3. data collection, and
4. data analysis.

The required theoretical framework for this study has been addressed in detail in Chapter II and will be referred to as is necessary within the context of the remainder of this chapter.

The Setting

Research was conducted in a neutral place in an open public location, which was convenient to the participants. The core of the field research consisted of ten undocumented male immigrants who live and attend higher education institutions in Central Texas. An Immigrant Students College Coordinator for the Austin Independent School District arranged the interviews with the participating immigrants.

The original names were kept anonymous. Their mode of entry into the United States was excluded in order to protect their residence and immigration status. The significance of these data will become more explicit as the analysis of the field data emerges in Chapter IV.

Preliminary Resource Identification

The effort undertaken to identify a population pool for the study was both time consuming and exhaustive for a variety of reasons. The most obvious factor was the fact that these data on undocumented male Mexican immigrant students enrolled in Texas higher education are ambiguous, misunderstood, and inconclusive. Prior to this research effort there had been only a few studies on female Mexican illegal (undocumented) immigrant students in the United States in higher education.

During the course of this part of the research effort, the Immigrant Students College Coordinator Bilingual/ESL Education Department from the Austin Independent School District was an important facilitator in identifying a database and coordinating the interviews for my study, which specifically consisted of a group criteria of male

undocumented Mexican immigrants pursuing a higher education. The first step in selecting a research population pool consisted of obtaining and reviewing a list of approximately 300 immigrant students. Secondly, in order to meet the criteria, the participant pool was narrowed by selecting those immigrants who were male and from Mexico. Third, of those male Mexican immigrants those who were specifically undocumented to live in the United States were selected. Furthermore, from the same select group, those who have entered or resided in the U.S. within the past five years and were presently pursuing a higher education were chosen. The college coordinator did a random sampling from this specific population pool of participants that met the required criteria previously described, resulting in a sample size of ten participants. In random sampling, every combination of items from the frame, or stratum, had an equal probability of occurring. It guarantees that the sample is representative of the frame but is unfeasible in many practical situations. It is a type of probability sampling.

After the participants were selected, each was contacted by telephone and an interview appointment was made at the college coordinator's office. The researcher took time to provide each participant with more details on the research topic, and a request was made to tape record the interviews, and none of the participants refused. The interviews were conducted from November 2004 to December 2004, with some follow-up interviews with the participants.

Data Collection

The main purpose of this study was to identify and describe the unique characteristics and experiences of undocumented male Mexican immigrants who are currently enrolled in a public post-secondary education institution. This research was primarily exploratory and investigative and as such it required the use of data collection techniques common to field research as described by Schatzman and Strauss (1973), who state that for research seeking to focus on attitudes and behavior of individuals it is necessary for:

> the researcher to get close to the people whom he studies; he understands that their actions are best comprehended where they live and work...a dialogue with persons in their natural situation will reveal the nuances of meaning from which their perspectives and definitions are continually forged. (p. 4)

Descriptive field research has been used extensively in attempts to understand group and cultural behavior and in the development of theory and the generation of hypotheses in the social sciences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lutz & Iannaconne, 1969; Olson, 1976; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Wilson, 1977). Argyris' (1960) research on organizational behavior employed qualitative methodology through semi-structured interviews to collect his data, as did Stevens (1973) in his study of law students' perceptions of their law school experiences.

Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) have collapsed three roles used in field research into a single classification that they call the "participant observer role." The three roles are:

1. The participant as an observer,

2. The observer as a participant, and

3. The observer as a non-participant.

In this study, unstructured interviews were used in the data collection. There were no structured questionnaires used since they would be,

> …less useful, though frequently used when tapping behavior. This difficulty emerges when asking about anticipated future behavior...in the context of the structured questionnaire it is difficult to spell out all of the contingencies, which may occur. (Olson, 1976, p. 214)

Another reason for relying on open-ended interviews is that this study required the respondents to express their own actions and identities. This technique was used because it was felt that it would eliminate what Schatzman and Strauss (1973) refer to as, "…the annoyance, frustration—even fury in a respondent's inability to express himself to his own satisfaction when confronted with questionnaire choices" (p. 72).

Schatzman and Strauss (1973) also provide this about the field interview:

> The field researcher, then, regards the interview as a lengthy conversation. But its length, its probable pre-arrangement and frequent distance from the scene of action are no excuse for continued formality in the interaction. Whatever it may be that the researcher is intent upon getting—a career sketch, statement of ideological position, an explanation of certain specific operations, or all of these—the researcher's mode approximate conversation. The way the researcher probes for detail, for surprise or disbelief, provide him with means for shaping an interview in this way. (p. 72)

Earlier in this chapter, the importance of a theoretical/ conceptual framework in qualitative research was made explicit. Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) re-emphasize this fact with a focus on this relationship to data collection:

> The conceptual framework through which the data is collected is essential to the observer…as indicated earlier, the framework should, in fact, tend to free the observation from the personal bias of the observer since it

> dictates the elements of behavior to be observed.…one cannot gather data in a vacuum for it's impossible to think without concepts. While a researcher can and should observe the system without pre-conceived notions regarding what he will or should observe, he must use concepts in order to code and store the data he observes. (p. 119)

Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) further advise that, "it is necessary for the researcher to recognize the inability to observe all the data concerning the phenomena under investigation" (p. 119). In essence, this means that the researcher should not expect to have data collected that address every element found in the theoretical/conceptual framework. These elements that are present will surface during the data analysis. Schatzman and Strauss (1973), Olson (1976), and Glaser and Strauss (1965) also adhere to this principle.

The interviews in this study were guided by the theoretical/conceptual framework previously mentioned in Chapter II. Lutz and Iannaccone (1969), Argyris (1960), and Glaser and Strauss (1967) have previously been cited as stressing the necessity of a theoretical framework for understanding the phenomena under study. They were intended to seek and discover the meaning structures of the participants in whatever form these structures were expressed. The questions were used to probe and get to know as much about the participants or incidents to which they referred in the theoretical constructs.

Data Analysis

Data collection was conducted under ethnographic procedures, an analytical methodology proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1965 & 1967), Schatzman and Strauss

(1973), and Erickson (1977). Glaser and Strauss's (1965) analytical method, used to generate substantive theory and hypotheses, was found to be a compatible method of analysis for this study. This method is viewed as "…the formulation of concepts and their inter-relationships into a set of hypotheses for a given substantive area based on research on that area" (Glaser & Strauss, 1965, p. 5).

Schatzman and Strauss (1973) describe this method in greater detail:

> Probably the most fundamental operation of qualitative data is that of discovering significant classes of things, persons and events and the properties which characterize them. In this process, which continues throughout the research, the analyst gradually comes to reveal his own "is's" and "because's," he names classes and links one with another at first with simple propositions that express the linkages and continues this process until his propositions fall into sets . . . this, at least, is the operational model the analyst will use when he is attempting to encompass or account for the greater part of his data. Whether his objective is straight description, analytic description or substantive theory, the task of establishing and linking classes is mandatory. (p. 110)

Schatzman and Stauss (1973) also annotate:

> [T]he analyst accepts and uses theory and organizational schemes that are exact in the discipline: he simply finds classes in the data which correspond with those commonly utilized in the discipline or in more common parlance, and he arranges them accordingly; that is, he links his classes in ways suggested by received classificatory schemes. (p. 110)

The primary data for this study were the male Mexican immigrant students in Texas higher education. Becker (1958) has provided these three steps, which he views as necessary for the analysis of field data:

1. the development of statements of what appears to be necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence of the phenomena under study;

2. statements that some phenomena are important or basic elements in the process; and
3. statements identifying a situation as an instance of some process or phenomenon that is described abstractly in the theory.

These statements, according to Lutz and Iannaccone (1969), Schatzman and Strauss (1973), and Wilson (1977) should emerge from the theories chosen by the researcher to guide the study. Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) indicate that these statements are not to be proved but, "are rather hypotheoretical guides to be modified as the data emerge. They point to the kinds of data, which may be meaningful and predict what may be observed" (p. 135).

Erickson (1977) also speaks to the same issue of qualitative analysis as Becker (1958), Schatzman and Strauss (1973), Wilson (1977), and Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) when he states:

> I think what qualitative research does best and most essentially is to describe key incidents in functionally relevant descriptive terms and places them in some relations to the wider social context, using the key incident as a concrete incident of the workings of abstract principles of social organizations. (p. 61)

Thus in analyzing field interview data, the researcher was guided by the same theoretical/conceptual framework which guided the data collection. Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) emphasize that it is important for a student of organizational behavior to have a good grasp of the possible explanations of the phenomena being investigating. They believe that data collected through field research should be analyzed through the utilization of concepts and theories from the various social and behavioral sciences.

In analyzing the field data, the researcher sets up a matrix scheme for classifying the critical incidents and activities found in the data. This scheme was suggested by Becker (1961) and Olson (1976) as a means for treating the data in such a way that a scheme emerges. This scheme allows the researcher to view the data that address the phenomena found in the theoretical framework that guided the study.

Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) refer to the value of the theoretical/conceptual framework in data analysis:

> Throughout the study the investigator has been armed with predictive statements that are derived from a theory. These formulate his conceptual framework. They should have played an important role in data collection. But it is in the analysis section of the report that they serve best. Here these statements must be dealt with modified or verified by the data. For this reason, some may wish to use these statements as central to the structure of the analysis section. (p. 152)

The questions that this study addressed contained those statements or elements to which Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) referred. In the analysis of the data, the main concern was in identifying those incidents or statements in the interviews that would, as Schatzman and Strauss (1973) believe, allow the analyst to reveal his own "is's" and "because's" with respect to the guiding conceptual framework.

Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) state that, "the measure of the field study is found in its contribution to conceptual explanation or theory. The descriptive data become significant contributions to knowledge only to the extent that these are used to elaborate theory" (p. 132). The data are first presented in descriptive form in Chapter IV and then in analytical form in Chapter V.

Summary

Quantitative research strategies require considerable front-end work. Qualitative-naturalistic inquiry, in contrast, permits the researcher to enter the field with little advance conceptualization. The design is emergent and flexible. The questions unfold as the researcher pursues what makes sense. This study will use individual interviews to identify and describe the unique characteristics, experiences, and resiliency of male Mexican immigrants who are currently enrolled in a public post-secondary education institution.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

If the United States wants to keep indulging its addiction to cheap foreign workers, it had better do so with full awareness of what comes next. For immigrants, and their children are people, not just labor, and they cannot be dismissed so easily when their work is done. The aftermath of immigration depends on what happens to these children. The prospects for many, given the obstacles at hand, appear dim.

—*The American Prospect*, April 8, 2002

Introduction

This chapter will present the research findings, beginning with an overview of the study. Described will be the factors and characteristics that influenced undocumented male Mexican immigrants and how their experiences demonstrate a resiliency to endure Americanization effectively and successfully navigate into higher education institutions. The patterns and themes that were collected through data analysis are presented in narrative form. In addition, the research data led the researcher to a further review of literature, which is included in the findings. The findings will present themes generated from the responses to the research questions that are delineated in Chapter I, which provided the foundation structure for this study. Consequently, the study results will be organized and presented by using five themes that come directly from the participants own words and experiences:

1. Experience of School and Community
2. Familial/Personal Networks-Orientations

3. Educational Support System
4. Defining and Preserving Self/Sustaining Hope (Resiliency)
5. Maintaining Identity

Overview of the Study

This analysis involved the selection of ten participants through a random sampling by the immigrant student college coordinator, bilingual/ESL education department of the Austin Independent School District (AISD). The first step in selecting the research population pool consisted of obtaining and reviewing a list of approximately 300 immigrant students. Secondly, in order to meet the criteria, the list of participants was narrowed by selecting those immigrants who were males and who emigrated from Mexico. Third, of those male Mexican immigrants selected, only those who were specifically undocumented and lived in the U.S. were chosen. Furthermore, from this unique group those who have entered or resided in the U.S., within the past five years and were currently enrolled in a college or university were selected. The college coordinator and the researcher then did a random sampling, resulting in the sample size of ten participants.

Excerpts from these interviews, in addition to an extensive discussion of "immigration experiences," will further clarify immigrants' instilled resiliency and an understanding of their characteristics. Interviews were conducted in an open public area to enhance participants' comfort level. The field research was conducted in the month of December, consisting of detailed notes of the interviews, some of which are included as

excerpts or empirical knowledge based on personal experiences, which helped to put the interview data in perspective. Accordingly, conversations with the immigrants were based on a set of open-ended questions (see Appendix A) that corresponded with the research objectives. The wording and sequence were entirely flexible, following the course, pace, and intensity of the conversation. The main topics in this interview guide were the following:

1. Undocumented Mexican immigrants' characteristics
2. Migration history, both between Mexico and the U.S. and within the U.S. territory
3. Personal networks in the U.S. and Mexico, including relatives, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances at the time of arrival, as well as relationships developed in the receiving society
4. Educational seeking strategies

Prior to each interview, study participants were given the opportunity to read or have read to them an explanation of the purpose of the interview, along with issues of anonymity and confidentiality. For safety reasons, verbal consent was requested rather than written, given that all were undocumented students at the time of our conversation. Although all interviews were carried out in English, many of the participants utilized Spanish to describe their personal feelings about their arduous socialization process. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one-and-a-half hours.

Interview Process

The connections made during the initial interviews included the college coordinator, which was crucial in gaining access and credibility to potential study participants. The college coordinator contacted each participant by telephone, taking into consideration their privacy, anonymity, and undocumented status. This helped to build a non-threatening atmosphere, resulting in the researcher's ability to "get along" with the participants with relative ease during research fieldwork. After completing several interviews and becoming familiar with the immigrants' experiences, a pattern of recurring themes emerged within participants' characteristics of resiliency that is manifested through support from their internal and external personal network. The findings in the subsequent chapter will illustrate undocumented male immigrants "resiliency" in successfully navigating selected Texas colleges or universities. Even though some immigrants were briefly hesitant about being interviewed, overall the process of data collection was fluid. The informants were approached with a courteous, yet casual attitude. The researcher made every attempt to be sensitive to their concerns, while avoiding the risk of becoming overly conscious of her "outsider" status. This strategy resulted in a rapport with the research participants. The relative degree of success in collecting rich and reliable data is supported by the fact that the immigrants were willing to talk and grant access to their lives and emotions. Contrary to expectations, respondents were open about their legal status, their immigration entry process, and spoke frankly about their experiences. They discussed their social experiences and personal hardships in the U.S., as well as their high school and post-

secondary setting; in addition, most of the Mexican immigrants shared their painful vignettes during migration.

Qualitative Analysis: Coding the Data

As the dialogues with the participants progressed, the investigation of "their experiences revealed an ongoing awareness of their reality that evolved into a heightened concept of a 'family sense of coherence' referring to the human struggle to perceive life as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful" (Antonovsky and Sournai, 1988, p. 278). Their strive for a sense of coherence (and hopefulness) is one of the key ingredients of relational resilience, those processes by which families cope and attempt to surmount persistent stress (Walsh, 1998, p. 278). While analyzing the content of our dialogues, the participants not only uncovered "knowledge" for themselves but also developed a greater appreciation of their new world, which transformed their realities. The data drawn from the participants' understanding of posed questions as well as from their commitment to examining and communicating events of their realities in this study have revealed potential themes. The data uncovered are not at the discretion of the researcher to conceal, distort, or suppress. Consequently, the findings were drawn together to uncover the realities and ambiguous worlds of the participants. This was accomplished by coding the recurring themes from all of the dialogues.

Thematic Responses

The generated themes provide a contextual framework that outlines the character of each participant's life. In turn, each participant's life is presented as a holistic view of their global migration experiences relating to situations and circumstances before, during, and after his/her journey to the United States. The themes reflected the participant's self-sufficiency, worth, and resiliency, which were consistent among all the participants. These themes shaped many of the expectations and predicaments of the participant's life, which demonstrates the ambiguous and conflicting reality in the strife of migration losses. The immigrants explicated about the multiple arduous hardships such as lack of language and information, immigration status, poverty, discrimination, and assimilation. These data were rich with material, providing significant context from which to weave a tapestry that would provide meaning for the study.

Overall, the participants' comments were portrayed by their own unique noteworthy personal accounts. Hardly any of the participants strived to make general statements. As a result, the researcher noted that the qualitative analysis data emanates best from the context found within the study's participant's substantive accounts and experiences (Lewis, 2003).

Findings

Each participant's categories with related themes are presented as they appear under inter-related context. Some themes emerged for some participants but not others

and certainly not in the same order. Therefore, each presentation of the findings conveys a different ordering of dialogue that best represents the individuality of each participant.

The following themes emerged among the views expressed by the ten interview participants in describing their ambiguous experiences while maneuvering through their journey to a better life in the U.S.:

1. Experience of School and Community
2. Family/Social Networks-Orientations &Educational Support System
3. Preserving Self/Sustaining Hope (Resiliency)
4. Maintaining Identity

The following section draws correlations between other studies that shed light on the lives and experiences of this study's participants. The conclusions and observations drawn from other research pertaining to this topic serve to explain and further clarify the phenomenon of experiences that cut across the participants' encounters as well as sub-themes following the researcher's perspective of participant's responses. While respecting the uniqueness of each participant's episodes, this final section explores what was learned from the expressed voices of these ten young men.

Experience of School & Community

What are institutional barriers that confront male Mexican immigrants as they attempt to access American higher education institutions? [Policies, admissions policies, financial requirements, language, documentation, etc.]

Literature: School & Community. Gallardo (1999) indicates that,

> the problems we face as educators encompass a great deal more than setting a foundation for reading and writing, especially for the child learning a second language. The school environment represents one example of the interdependency shared by the academic, cognitive, and linguistic components in the development of the whole child. The social cultural context plays an equally important role. (p. 147)

Nieto (1996) defines pedagogy as more than the techniques or strategies that teachers employ to make learning more fun or interesting; it is "how teachers perceive the nature of learning and what they do to create conditions that motivate students to learn and to become critical thinkers" (p. 98). Over and again, the participants in this study expressed a desire to engage in their learning.

Respectively, the value of a "caring" teacher should never be underestimated. Even under the most dire school environments, a teacher who displays care through his/her actions can make a tremendous impact on the lives of students (Valenzuela, 1999; Nieto, 1996; Cummins, 1996). All ten young men referred to teachers in their lives whose acts of care provided a safe haven for their identities as well as for their desire to learn. These teachers' expressions aligned with the parents to reinforce the message that these young men are expected to succeed and, in doing so, provide a culturally congruent environment.

Their reciprocity of relationship reflects what Valenzuela (1999) describes as a vision of education that parallels the Mexican concept of education. More definitively, the term "educacion"—"a model of schooling premised on respectful, caring relations" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 61) was demonstrated by these teachers' desire for these young men to succeed. The immigrant students college coordinator made herself available to the ten participants even though she was no longer their assigned counselor. The ESL

teacher refused to send out her dominantly Spanish-speaking students for assistance from the ESL aide and requested that they, instead, come to her for help. She goes above and beyond to make sure that all students succeed in her class.

These ten young men discussed how the quality of the relationship between them and their teachers opened the door to persistence and engagement. If the relationship is a positive one and the teacher expresses care and works with them to meet expectations of success, then they are able to seek that teacher out when help is needed. In other words, the capital of relationship builds a sense of trust and confidence that encourages learning to take place. Additionally, it infuses an additional element of accountability where the relationship bears on the student to do well for themselves, but also in order to meet the expectations of their parents and teachers.

The various relationships noted by these young men contrasts with Valenzuela's (1999) observation:

> In my many conversations with teachers, only a few indicated that they knew many of their students in a personal way, and very few students said that they thought that their teachers knew them or that they would be willing to go to their teachers for help with a personal problem. Despite perceiving of themselves as caring, many teachers unconsciously communicate a different message to their colleagues as well as to their students. (p. 63-64)

Noddings (1984) provides a framework by which to examine what happens when there is disconnect between teacher and student. She suggests that the role of teachers is to initiate relations with their students and thereby engage themselves in the welfare of their student. A teacher's attitudinal predisposition is essential to caring so that if this quality is absent, then the welfare of the student is neglected. The living examples of

their teachers proves that culturally congruent models of teaching exist. Furthermore, these teachers serve to mitigate the damage inflicted by residual acts of fear. Their efforts reconnect these young men to their charged task of acquiring an education and, in doing so, refuel the expressed aspirations of these young men's parents.

Exploring School and Community. This section will provide clarity and categorize the information into sub-themes. The participant's voices, along with the literature, will be used to illustrate what is relevant to the sub-themes.

Feelings toward the teachers. In the individual sessions, Participant #5 made the following insightful statement, "Some teachers have to understand that because they have a degree on teaching doesn't mean that they know how to teach" (personal communication, December 1, 2004). Participant #2 added, "They might know it…but they don't know how to explain it" (personal communication, December 3, 2004). Participant #5 differentiated between teachers who are knowledgeable about their subject and those who are knowledgeable about how to teach people. He noted how his own school experience lacked teachers who could engage him. He traces the ongoing cycle of disengagement from school to when he was criticized in tenth grade for not speaking English. His lack of English fluency and success in the classroom, rather than improving, only compounded over the years to the point where he was forced to take additional courses for an alternative education program. He traced back the beginning of his recollections where derogatory treatment framed his experience of school,

> I remember sitting in class and my teacher called on me to answer the question. I felt nervous and scared because I didn't know how to

> pronounce many words in English. But, I answered the best that I could and she (teacher) corrected me and asked me to stay after class. I was so embarrassed. I could see the other students whispering, while I sat in my chair waiting for the bell to ring. She referred me to go to another class for beginners. (personal communication, December 1, 2004)

In this respect, Participant #7 expressed,

> To me, the first few weeks of school were difficult, sometimes terrifying, other times humiliating. There were several times that I considered withdrawing from school. Yet, fortunately there was only one teacher that made a difference and she instructed me what direction to take (personal communication, December 4, 2004).

This encounter exemplifies the barriers that these immigrants confront while attempting to acquire an education in the United States

Participant #2 spoke openly about his pride for his Mexican culture and the Spanish language. His early school experiences, however, reflected a response not to what he knows but rather to what he does not know. He was subsequently isolated for not knowing the English language.

Valenzuela (1999) discusses this process of stripping one's knowledge and worth, particularly one's Mexicanidad as part of a larger subtractive cultural assimilation historic process known as Americanization. Language, "a means by which people communicate more than just thought and feelings but a link to one's culture, values, and heritage" (Nieto, 1996, p.136) falls prey to this process. When Participant #2 shared his experience during the individual dialogue session, he was upset, and out of desperation he tenaciously continued to practice and read on his own and sought help from his friends and ESL teacher.

Participant #7 describes a classroom climate that does not allow for making mistakes while one is learning. The fear of ridicule stifled his willingness to express himself in the language he was learning. He explicated about how his limitation of the English language impacted his ability to perform in the classroom,

> I don't understand English that much. So when they speak with big words…I won't raise my hand to ask what does that mean? If I don't understand something I wait to look it up in the dictionary or ask one of my friends. (personal communication, December 4, 2004)

This theme of ongoing disengagement and lack of progress persisted in Participant #7 classroom experiences while he attempted to learn English. Gallardo (1999) believes that long-term success of English language learners is predicated on programs that integrate schooling with English and non-English speakers learning academically through each other's languages. In other words, the value of language must be perceived and attributed with equal status and academia. Participant #7 expanded upon the issue of language as an impediment to learning required content,

> The reality is that in America for Mexican immigrants the first problem that we encounter is not knowing or able to understand and communicate fully in English. It is the worst feeling, because everyone makes you feel inadequate. The first and most important thing to learn is English, when I think about it I feel bad because Spanish is a much more romantic language that makes one communicate and describe your feelings clearer. (personal communication, December 4, 2004)

A teacher not appearing to be considerate or understanding will become obvious, further exacerbating the to Mexican immigrant's ongoing process of disengagement. Though students speak English, their level of understanding provokes a downward spiral of academic failure. Participant #7 observed that he facilitated this by "not reading," "not

doing homework," and by leaving "certain problems out." Evidence of students' inability to excel in the classroom is apparent to Participant #7 who determines that teachers "know we don't understand…if they have worked here for many years they should get the point." Yet, what he and other students conclude is since his teachers do not speak Spanish, "they are not going to understand anyway" (personal communication, December 4, 2004).

The participants suggested that teachers either do not fully empathize with the students that they are charged with teaching or they don't care enough to want to empathize with the challenges of students who are not succeeding. Participant #2 defines the correlation between teachers ignoring indicators of disengagement to why Mexican students fall behind: "When they don't put any effort, you're not going to put an effort either. They just want to get paid" (personal communication, December 3, 2004).

Curriculum and instruction. Another paradox revolved around curriculum issues. Many U.S. educators mistakenly assume that because children emigrate from a Third World country, their education is somehow substandard or inferior compared to the education received in a Texas public school. In his study of immigrant-sending schools and communities, Macias (1990) found the reverse to be true. According to Macias (1990), the federal government of Third World countries reside at the top of a centralized hierarchy, providing performance standards, support, and oversight at every level of the educational system. In this system, curricular standardization is comprehensive. This means that a first grader in any Mexican public school is presented the exact same

curriculum, the same textbooks, and the same objectives, regardless of where that first grader attends school in the nation. The use of one book sets the stage for integrated instruction for all core areas: reading, writing, science, social studies, and math. Lessons take on a thematic approach to incorporate all basic skills within the content being presented. This approach stresses holistic understanding with reading, writing, and other skills as byproducts of students' interaction with content (LeBlanc-Flores, 1996; Macias, 1990).

According to the data, the curriculum is more rigorous and conceptually demanding at the primary grades than typical U.S. curricula (Macias, 1990). An international perspective characterizes the social studies and reading programs. Text by international authors provides a more comprehensive base for reading than the traditional primers used in the United States (Macias, 1990). Students schooled in Texas, who return to Mexico, must usually repeat a grade in order to catch up with their Mexican peers (Valenzuela, 1999).

Another subject taught at higher standards is elementary mathematics. This is evidenced by students' abilities to cipher and problem-solve mathematical problems at an earlier age. Mexican students are expected to solve and carry much of their mathematical computations in their heads, whereas math students in U.S. public schools are required to show even the simplest calculations on paper. Several participants' stories revealed their emotions on how they felt during their classroom sessions.

Participant #10 stated, "We were more advanced in math. We had already covered this material in elementary school" (personal communication, December 11, 2004). Participant #2 annotated,

> During the first week of class, I remember the teacher giving out the syllabus for the semester with all the assignments that were to be done and given to the teacher. I started doing them in class and finished the required homework for the semester over a few weeks. (personal communication, December 3, 2004)

Participant #8 described, "I remember in my math course, I was so bored with the notes and the teacher explaining equations that I had already learned in Mexico" (personal communication, December 10, 2004).

In contrast to U.S. teachers' misconceptions of an impoverished education, children of Mexican immigrants do not receive an inferior education in their native country solely based on its Third World status. Rather, they receive a rigorous curriculum in their early elementary grades (Macias, 1990). Attendance in "primaria" (grades 1-6) is compulsory. Mexican children in urban settings typically attend "kinder" and "primaria." Attendance in rural areas is dependent on availability of instructors and facilities, but follows a similar pattern. Enrollment in "secundaria" (middle school) is encouraged, but not mandatory. Both elementary and middle school education is free, and a minimal fee is assessed at "preparatoria" (high school).

However, once the student is enrolled in the U.S., the importance of trust in the school environment cannot be over estimated. It is trust that students and school officials build together that enables students to seek help in resolving academic and personal issues. This becomes a daunting task in the high school where the ratio of students to

teachers or counselors is exceptionally high. The vignettes and subsequent conversations revealed that the participants endured isolation, yet still persevered by reaching out to their very few trusted contacts for information and guidance.

For Participant #8, this hard reality may be the reason why he continues to struggle academically, yet never falters from his belief in education. He spoke about his teacher and counselor to whom he was able to turn for help. He was bilingual, meaning that his native language is important but perhaps not always essential to the learning process. When given the opportunity, he sought out this teacher and counselor, either in after tutoring sessions or by going to their classroom or office during the day.

Although there have been remarkable stories glorifying both the teacher and counselor who made the difference in a student's life, where is the answer for a student like Participant #8? As long as he is in the company of the aforementioned teacher or counselor, he feels capable and his grades improve. However, as soon as he is away from his inspiring teachers, he feels helpless, frustrated, and isolated.

What is remarkable about all of the participants confronted with language as a barrier, is that none of them gave up. Even though they were reluctant to ask questions and seek out help, which hindered their advancement, they still persevered in high school. As a result, all of them graduated from high school and are tenaciously attending a selected Texas institution of higher education. Participant #9 explained what it takes to succeed:

> Higher Education is very important. We need to pursue an education because Mexican males need to succeed. My philosophy is "we are not

> better than you…we are all the same." (personal communication, December 6, 2004)

In addition, Participant #3 described his attributions for success in school.

> Higher education is the only answer to a successful life and vital future. (personal communication, December 8, 2004)

Participant #4 also displays his unyielding view in emphasizing his determination.

> Education is critical. Without education, you cannot make a difference in your life and in helping others. Higher education allows a Mexican immigrant to be considered and valued as a citizen of the United States. (personal communication, December 7, 2004)

Language as a barrier. Strong social sanctions were demonstrated by many Spanish-dominant students against those who chose to speak in English when it was not necessary to do so. Participant #5 was singled out for speaking English. He was rejected by his former peers for choosing to mainstream. Not only was there criticism from Mexican peers for speaking English, there was ridicule from English-dominant students. The participants expressed the fear and embarrassment they felt:

> It's a good thing the bell is going to ring now and she didn't call on me to read because I get embarrassed. I'd rather her take points off than have me read out loud. (Participant #5, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

When asked to share their personal thoughts about their experience in the classroom, their devotion to the continued quest for learning was reflected when they responded with the following comments.

> When I was in a regular class they looked at me funny. They made fun of me. I was embarrassed to talk. There were bad people who made fun of me when I spoke and made me feel afraid and embarrassed. (Participant #4, personal communication, December, 7, 2004).

> At times students make fun of me when I don't say the words correctly. In the beginning it hurt. But now, I get in front of the class and I read and speak, and sometimes they laugh but I don't care. (Participant #9, personal communication, December 6, 2004)

> The loss of communicating and understanding English from an undocumented status (Mexican immigrant) complicates our outlook and the sense of feeling and belonging makes me feel like a second-class citizen. While in Mexico, I was always equal to everyone else. (Participant #2, personal communication, December 3, 2004)

Undocumented status. The non-resident status of the study participants had profound effects on their lives. As seniors in high school, they were aware that their job options were limited to those employers who did not ask for social security numbers, and that scholarships and financial aid for the university was available only to U.S. citizens. Not having citizenship caused Participant #6 to decide to continue higher education. Participant #4 and Participant #9 seemed to become more cynical about their future over time, as they realized the only jobs awaiting them were the menial jobs that their parents had. All of the participants did not let themselves get discouraged, even though they had non-legal status that limited their job opportunities and which would surely affect their educational options after they graduated from a Texas community college or university.

The students appeared to be more aware of the ramifications of their legal status as the years passed. It was common knowledge among the students who had residency or citizenship and who did not. As freshmen in college, they did mention the possible effects of legal status when discussing their future plans. They all mentioned the possibility of more laws and policies changing as they referenced H.B. 1403. This law broadened state residency to include all graduates of Texas high schools (or individuals

that receive the equivalent thereof from Texas), regardless of immigration status, with the following conditions: be enrolled in a state college or university; have resided in Texas for three or more years; and sign an affidavit promising to file an application to become a permanent resident at the earliest possible opportunity. This was signed into law on June 16, 2001, and became effective immediately. This bill was sponsored by Representative Rick Noriega (Republican), District 145 in Austin, Texas, at the 77th Legislative Session.

Although not having legal residency discourages many immigrants from pursuing higher education, the participants in this study reflect a vigorous determination not to allow this non-resident status issue to affect their educational aspirations. Some of the students commented on how their legal status affected their lives:

> I want to graduate from college but I hope the government continues to make laws that give us more opportunities. (Participant #1, personal communication, December 5, 2004)

Patricipant #8 believes that his status will change. He hopes that the government will see the importance of allowing immigrants to remain in America. He sees the dilemma—why does the government allow them to study in college but not work in the U.S. after college

Interview after interview, student after student, reflected the identical emotions and fears. As new students in a higher education setting and as recent immigrants, the recurring theme on the first day of school was fear. Some fears were normal ones and other worries were real. While these participants expressed their unbending fortitude to obtain an education, they still faced and encountered fear issues on a daily basis when attending school. Participant #8 emphasized, "I was afraid. I did not know anything or

anyone" (personal communication, December 10, 2004). In addition, Participant #1 indicated, "I felt alone and as if I did not belong" (personal communication, December 5, 2004). The theme of fears and anxiety continued to appear in the discussions in attending U.S. schools. Participant #6 reinforced this concern when he spoke about how his experience with his ESL teacher during high school was discouraging. She talked down to him and repeatedly told him that he could not do the work and he remembers receiving zeros on his homework or tests over and over. "I felt the pressure to quit and start working" (personal communication, December 2, 2004).

Several students also made reference to extreme mental fatigue from straining to understand English all day long. Participant #4 explained how he heard everyone speaking English and would try to write some words and look them up in the dictionary. He hoped one day that he would be able to pronounce the words and understand the language. Participant #5 added to this perspective when he emphasized that the teachers would speak English and he would feel lost, frustrated, isolated. He remembered how as a first-time high school student in the U.S. he told himself: "One day, I will be able to talk back in English to everyone." He mentioned that other students in the same situation would try to help translate the information as best as they could. But, there were some Hispanic students that would not help. He concluded with this statement, "I want to have a life like the Americans" (Participant #5, personal communication, December 1, 2004).

Americanization. Another major barrier for the immigrant students is the pull of American competitive values and the emphasis on individuality and assertiveness. Immigrants today, "becoming Americanized is detrimental to youngsters' achievement

and terrible for their overall mental health" (Steinberg, Brown, and Dornbusch, 1996, p. 98).

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) point out that acculturation weakens family values as children adopt more individual-centered orientations. They add that it is not acculturation but the form that it takes that leads to different degrees of estrangement between immigrants and their children.

Suárez-Orozco (2000) contends that immigrant parents worry about losing their children to the influences of American peers. Their children, on the other hand, understand that in order to survive in the world that lies outside their home, they must develop social skills to confront the ways of the new world. These ten participants have been able to overcome barriers by excelling academically as well as in their extracurricular pursuits. The fear of "Americanization," however, permeated as they and their parents struggled to find a compromise between their perceived goals and those they have adopted. In the end, they opted for a community college or university that fit their needs or the needs of their family. (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

To some extent, they are assimilating; however, they are also experiencing major frustrations when they find that because of language difficulties, they cannot do as well as they feel they could. In particular, they feel the instructors do not understand or are not tolerant or supportive of the students discretion and their differences in being more open and supportive. In some cases, they feel their instructors give them a lower grade because they do not participate more, even though they know the material but hold back because of difficulties with the language. They feel the instructors could deal with them

with more patience. Also they feel the pressures on them to give up aspects of their identity.

> My experience was different with the culture and assimilating as well as the language. I respect other cultures, beliefs, and opinions. But I hold on to my culture, values, and beliefs. (Participant #4, personal communication, December 7, 2004)
>
> Students treated me differently, because I did not speak their language (English). (Participant #6, personal communication, December 2, 2004)

Family/Social Networks-Orientations and Educational Support System

What are some of the coping skills and resources that male Mexican immigrants use to both access and participate successfully in a training or academic transfer program in a college or university? [Some of the resources may be institutional or community, familial or a network of friends, etc.]

Literature: Supporting Family

Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) believe that "family cohesion and the maintenance of a well-functioning system of supervision, authority, and mutuality are perhaps the most powerful factors in shaping the well-being and future outcomes of all children-immigrant and nonimmigrant alike" (p. 82). As in the study of the ten young men, the messages and modeling provided by their parents served to counter negating forces in the host society. The prevalence of familism and the expressed aspirations recounted by the parents instill in these young men a sense of love and worth.

Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) also indicate that children who have a vague understanding of why the family migrated looked to the migration at an imposition. This is not the case with the participants in this study. They refer to the opportunities available in the United States that were not available in their home country. Although the definition of the goal to be achieved may vary between son and parents, the latter still attempt to infuse their sons with their aspirations. Conversely, the same opportunity structures provided also change the dynamics of family relationships as men and their families search for a better life.

Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) point to a number of factors that make a difference in the successful adaptation of immigrant families in the new land. For example, personality and temperament contribute to a healthy response to the dramatic changes that require the ability to adapt to new circumstances. Additionally, being able to draw upon a variety of coping strategies is another asset.

The response to the changes that these outside forces imposed upon traditional family values, roles, and expectations varied from participant to participant. Immigrant families want their children to acquire certain cultural competencies like the use of the English language. However, when a particular American trait or attitude is perceived to threaten family unity, they can, at times, actively resist these particular traits. The form and manner of each participant's response to the forces from outside the home ultimately affected their psycho-social well being. Participant #9 noted, "My parents always instilled education while I was young. Studying is really the only way to improve my life" (personal communication, December 6, 2004). Participant #4 stressed, "Education is

very important. I see how Americans live. I want to study and work so that I can have better houses, better jobs, and better opportunities" (personal communication, December 7, 2004). Participant #1 said, "I realized that the way to make it in this country is with an education. I need to succeed in school; students need to have initiative, work hard, and be serious so that they can be taken seriously" (personal communication, December 5, 2004).

Role of social networks/relations of learning. The need for a healthy social support network has long been regarded as a key factor in stress as well as a predictor of well being for adults and children alike (Cobb, 1976; Cohen and Syme, 1985). Interpersonal relationships perform a number of functions: social companionship, a basic need, maintaining and enhancing self esteem, and providing acceptance and approval (Wills, 1985). Instrumental social support gives individuals and their families tangible aid (such as running an errand or lending money) as well as guidance and advice (including information, job, and housing leads).

These instrumental supports are particularly critical for disoriented immigrant newcomers. Quite predictably, a well-functioning social network is closely linked to better adjustment (Wills, 1985). In all social systems, the family is a basic structural unit. For Mexican immigrant families, however, the extended family members (godparents, aunts, uncles, and older cousins) are a critical source of tangible instrumental and emotional support.

Families can support immigrant student's schooling in a variety of ways. Equally important, good parenting provides an emotional safe haven for children, fostering the

development of a healthy sense of belonging, self-esteem, and emotional well-being. Most of the students mentioned that their parents or guardians considered their education to be very important. Indeed, six of the students' families moved to the United States specifically to improve the educational opportunities for their children. Almost all of the ten students reminisced about attending their senior year and expressed the presence of strong parental support for their education:

> My parents offered support in any direction I chose to take. Neither my brothers nor parents finished high school. Since they did not finish high school, they encouraged me to continue my education so that I would not end up as they had. (Participant #2, personal communication, December 3, 2004)

> My parents let me decide if I wanted to go to school. Every morning, my mom would leave different messages on post-it notes by my bedside telling me that she was proud of me, keep up the good work, and I have faith in you. (Participant #8, personal communication, December 10, 2004)

The ESL experience. The adults who work in educational programs are often equipped to provide tutoring, educational guidance, advice about the college application process, and job search assistance—information often inaccessible to immigrant youth whose parents have not navigated the academic system in the United States and who attend schools with few guidance counselors (Roffman, Suarez-Orozco, and Rhodes, 2002). ESL programs may be a welcome alternative to the environment in many schools serving disadvantaged communities where immigrant students may not feel comfortable or welcomed. This is often the case among Mexican immigrants, who report feeling discriminated against by their teachers, who are placed disproportionately into lower-

track and special needs classes, and who cite a sense of rejection by the school as an important reason for dropping out (Garcia, Wilkinson, and Ortiz, 1995; Katz, 1999).

The participants had mixed feelings about the ESL track. It seemed to be general knowledge that the subject matter was easier in ESL classes compared to mainstream classes. They concurred that they learned more English in regular classes, but several mentioned the social costs of being in the regular classroom- the feelings of embarrassment and isolation and being ridiculed by mainstream students. Out of ten participants, only one of the students asked to be mainstreamed.

The student who went mainstream did so because of information he received from out side sources—by counselor and friends. Apart from that, he did not seem to have received information about having a choice on whether to be mainstreamed in the school he attended.

> I never asked to go into an ESL class; I never thought to say anything. The truth is he never talked much about it. When registering for classes, the counselor stated, "You're going to be with this teacher," and that is the way it is. At the end of my senior year, I understood. In the beginning, it is fine to be in ESL, when you first come and do not know English, but it is logical to move on. Regular classes push you more and you advance yourself because they teach you more. After a year or two, I was able to know some English. Other students should be moved to regular classes so that they can be encouraged to learn more English. (Participant#1, personal communication, December 5, 2004)

During the interviews, students were asked about the programs that facilitated their inclusion in regular classes versus ESL classes. Responses varied, but the majority preferred ESL classes.

> These ESL classes are easy to understand. The counselor wanted to give me a regular class once, but I declined. I felt more comfortable with

> students like myself in these classes. (Participant #5, personal communication, December 1, 2004)
>
> I was in all ESL classes. The counselor put me in these classes. It was o.k. to be in ESL, so we do not forget our Spanish while learning English. It was convenient having friends that understand my ways of life, and what I was going through. (Participant #2, personal communication, December 3, 2004)
>
> Regular classes were more difficult for me. The teacher would speak rapidly and I did not understand. I would have to figure it out for myself. In ESL classes, I already knew everyone. I preferred it that way because I was with friends and the teacher explained things more clearly and slowly. (Participant #7, personal communication, December 4, 2004)

One of the participants demonstrated the ambiguity caused by being in the ESL classes.

> I had very mixed feelings about which class to remain, because I knew that by going to the regular classes I would learn more English and be exposed to more subjects to lean as well as the American culture. However, the students in these regular classes were very different from me even the Hispanics because they were not Mexicans so sometimes I would feel ridiculed and left out. It was like I did not belong. On the other hand, in the ESL classes the students were in the same situation like I was. (Participant #3, personal communication, December 8, 2004)

These types of encounters were echoed by most of the participants. They faced an ongoing dilemma of either remaining in a safe environment that would provide them with limited opportunities to advance or facing a difficult situation that could possibly prepare them for college or adversely cause them to drop out. One student resented being placed in ESL classes:

> The counselor put me in the classes he thought I should be attending. I wanted to be in regular classes from the beginning. He could tell that it was too difficult for me even though I knew I could do the work. I think I could have advanced more quickly in regular classes. I would have had to speak English in regular classes, so I think they would have been better for me, because I would have learned more. Other students in ESL had been placed in regular classes and then I asked why I wasn't. I always got good

> grades. The counselor said it was because others had been in the U.S. for a longer time. I told him, "I've been here a long time too and you haven't changed me." He never changed me. I think the regular classes would have help prepared me more for my college years. Even though I requested regular classes, the counselor placed me in ESL courses. Looking back I should have went higher up to get them. (Participant #1, personal communication, December, 5, 2004)

Staying in school and beating the odds. These young men have undergone profound shifts in their sense of self and are struggling to negotiate changing circumstances in relationships with their parents and peers (Rhodes, 2002). Stanton-Salazar (2001) found that although low-income Mexican immigrant parents highly valued educational success for their children, few of them actually understood their children's school experiences or the role they as parents had in facilitating their children's access to postsecondary education.

The ten participants in this research graduated and gave various reasons for staying in school. They all mentioned they wanted to do it for their parents as well as for themselves. They all wanted to show appreciation and fulfill a commitment to their parents and siblings. The participants also mentioned the opportunities that came with an education. Other participants discussed why they stayed in school.

> Many drop out of school because of personal problems. Some have to return to Mexico. Some kids join gangs or others get jobs either cleaning houses, apartments, or at fast food restaurants and they start to make a lot of money and they figure this is where their future is so they quit school. I think I have gone on because, even though I have my problems, that if I love myself I have to think about what's best for me. I do not want to be cleaning yards or hanging out on the street corner all my life. I think that parents can force kids to go to school, but the student has to put a piece of themselves into it, if they want to succeed. I think of myself and my family (here and in Mexico), so I ask myself, "How will I be able to help

> any of us, if I do not finish all of my education?" (Participant #6, personal communication, December 2, 2004)
>
> I feel it is necessary to study to have a good job, a good life, without school and an education you cannot advance yourself. You cannot go far without an education. You cannot have a nice house. I want nice things. I have a cousin that did not finish school and he just hangs out in the streets. I think those students want to live their lives fast, and to have a good time. They do not think about the future. (Participant #10, personal communication, December 11, 2004)

Networking with relatives and friends. Families migrate to improve their lives. For many, immigration results in opportunity and personal growth. But there are costs involved in all immigrant journeys. Immigration is a transformative process with profound implications for the family (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Immigrant children experience a particular pattern of changes that have lasting effects upon their development. And yet, surprisingly, little systematic research has focused on the psychological experience of immigrant children (Garcia-Coll and Magnuson, 1998). The majority of the immigrant participants had established family connections. These relatives were instrumental in helping the newcomers adjust to the new country. They also provided encouragement, employment opportunities, and insights on how to become established in their new schooling.

> I lived in Mexico City. We came here because my father sent for us. He already had an established job, and he knew that there were more opportunities for all us here, in Austin. (Participant #1, personal communication, December 5, 2004)
>
> I had researched and dreamed of what it would be like to live in the United States. My parents made the decision to immigrate to the U.S. My mother immigrated first to Austin, Texas and she lived with her sister. We lived with our father in Mexico City, and eventually we all followed a year later. (Participant #2, personal communication, December 3, 2004)

One of the participants stated that nine different relatives had immigrated to this area due in large part to his aunt. His aunt even went so far as to recommend this area of town for the schooling he and his cousins would receive from this particular ESL teacher at this Texas middle school.

> Because of my aunt, we were able to immigrate nine relatives. We all came here. All of my cousins attended this school. We all learned from the same ESL teacher. She is an excellent teacher. (Participant #10, personal communication, December 11, 2004)

Another participant's family came to a particular area because of recommendations from a network of friends.

> Some friends from Mexico came over here. They had been here two years, before we had arrived. I was going to enroll in a different school when they told me about another school that had a wonderful ESL program. Therefore, my mother enrolled me at that school instead of the other one. (Participant #7, personal communication, December 4, 2004)

Many separations lasted for years. In some cases, the father immigrated first, obtained stable employment, and arranged for the reunification of the family.

> I came from Mexico City, D.F... I live with my parents. My dad was living in the U.S. for five years and only visited one time while living in the U.S. I was only in fourth grade when my father left for the states. I remember my dad telling me that when I got older, he would bring us to the States, so we all could be together again. (Participant #5, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

> I came from Toluca, Mexico. I have family here in the United States and in Mexico. It is hard because I have a brother and sister I have not seen in four years, but on the other hand, I have my other two brothers here with my parents. It was difficult leaving Mexico, because I had not seen my father in five years and two of my older brothers stayed behind. It is a compromise between our family and a better way of life. We help each other in every way possible and dream of the day when we are all together

as a family again. (Participant #3, personal communication, December 8, 2004)

Educational Support System

What coping skills and resources do male Mexican immigrants use to access and participate successfully in a training or academic transfer program in a college or university? [Some of the resources may be institutional or community, familial or a network of friends, etc.]

Support from Literature

The schooling of Mexican immigrants within larger education ecology respects and responds to the values of education possessed by immigrant families (Goldenberg and Gallimore, 1995; Ruiz, 1997). This larger ecology includes not only the schools but also the social relationships and cultural resources found in local households and other community settings.

The emphasis is on challenging the ideological and structural constraints that are so dominant in the schooling of Latino children through a strategic and vigorous agency building on the culturally grounded resources of children, families, and communities (Moll and Gonzalez, 1997).

The purpose of this section/sub theme is relevant to the study in order to highlight some major issues related to the schooling of Mexican immigrants in the United States. This is a challenging task given the diversity of this population, its emerging

geographical expansion, and the dilemma of the topic. This education must also be understood in relation to the social class characteristics of the population, because it is this factor, more than any other, which determines the essence and quality of their schooling.

Academy for Collegiate Excellence and Student Success (ACCESS). Colleges and universities around the nation are spending considerable time and resources on enhancing academic, social, and personal development programs targeted at freshmen. As graduation rates have fallen, institutions of higher learning have begun to front-load resources in an attempt to retain students through the most critical freshman year. Depending on the state and type of institution, between 16 and 40 percent of all students arriving at our colleges and universities today are underprepared to do the academic work of their respective schools. In Texas, a significant number of entering freshmen are categorized as academically underprepared and in need of state-mandated remediation. Unfortunately, the cost of this remediation has risen exponentially while college graduation rates have continued to decline dramatically. These facts prompted some state lawmakers in the mid-1990's to consider significantly reducing funding for post-secondary remediation. This action had the potential of negatively affecting access to higher education for large numbers of young Texans. Dr. Charles A. Hines, former President of Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU), envisioned a program, the Academy for Collegiate Excellence and Student Success (ACCESS), that would provide intensive up-front assistance for post-secondary students at risk of not persisting in college. Many students are considered at-risk due to their academic under preparedness,

others are considered as at-risk due to transitional issues such as lack of family support, and still others are seen as at-risk due to co curricular commitments their freshman year. Dr. Hines convinced the Texas Legislature to fund his vision. The ACCESS program's goals were to increase retention and graduation rates, improve academic performance and, where necessary, reduce a student's total time in remediation, thereby reducing the long-term cost to the state. This program is important for Texas, but it has relevance nationwide. In 1996, the first ACCESS program at PVAMU was implemented as a state-funded special item with support from State Representatives Steve Ogden and Garnet Coleman.

The Academy for Collegiate Excellence and Student Success has three key strategies—academic enhancement, effective advisement coupled with centralized support services, and a structured, academically focused residential environment—and two primary components: an intensive, residential summer, pre-college academic component and a holistic, centralized student support services component during the freshman year. The three key strategies are found in both components but with a different priority and emphasis. (Note: The residential piece was not added to the freshman component until 1998.) In the summer, academic enhancement is the primary emphasis, while in the freshman component advisement is primary. Now beginning its eighth year, the ACCESS program's students continue to exceed the states average for retention to the sophomore year and continually exceed the first semester GPA of the freshman class at PVAMU.

The ACCESS summer component is seven weeks long. It is a very structured program called by many an "academic boot camp." Prior to entry, participants sign a contract agreeing to abide by the program rules, including a curfew and prohibition of personal phones and TVs. Study and self-discipline are stressed. As part of the research for the ACCESS curricula, the components of the state-mandated Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) examination were carefully scrutinized. Analysis of comprehensive test data showed that PVAMU mirrors the state of Texas in terms of weak areas: problem solving and critical thinking skills. These findings prompted the ACCESS coordinators to build the program's curriculum around a constructivist model emphasizing the three basic content areas of math, reading, and composition, while concentrating on learning strategies that address the demonstrated weak skill areas of problem solving and critical thinking. ACCESS students are in class daily from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., taking courses in math, composition, reading comprehension, critical thinking, and problem solving/research methods. The students attend structured three-hour study halls five nights a week, which includes individual tutoring, assisted small group study and three workshops weekly in the areas of study skills, articulation, and math enhancement.

The summer component includes an active advisement/counseling element that utilizes the services of graduate, certification and doctoral students. As part of their required practicum, these students are each assigned a small group of ACCESS participants. They administer the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) and the Holland Self-directed Search Test to each of their assignees. Each advisor then meets with each student individually at least twice during the seven weeks to interpret and

discuss the results of these tests. As part of the summer component, ACCESS students who require it receive preparation for the state mandated TASP exam, which they take at the end of the program. Assisting students in passing this exam and exiting remediation expedites the student's completion of his/her degree program and reduces the long-term costs to the state.

ACCESS students participate in leadership training, social and personal development activities, and cultural enrichment experiences on the weekends. These activities are geared to broaden students' horizons by requiring them to utilize the critical thinking and problem solving skills they are developing in the classroom. These activities have included the Challenge Works experienced-based leadership training at Texas A&M, Peter Loews Success Seminar, a visit to a foreign consulate, a mock Mars Mission, performances by the symphony and the traveling company of the Broadway musical, 'The Lion King," etiquette training, professional sporting events (each sporting activity includes a behind-the-scenes meeting with the team's business management or other personnel to discuss careers in sports that do not involve "playing the game") and visits to a variety of museums and other educational activities. Each ACCESS session closes with a two-day trip to Austin/San Antonio that includes a special visit and briefing at the State Capitol.

ACCESS students have participated in all phases of student life. They have been student body president, Ms. Prairie View, Outstanding AROTC and JROTC graduates, football quarterbacks, soccer players, band members, and participants in the Gilpin players, PALS and leaders in all areas of campus activity. They have been retained at a

higher rate and had a more academically successful freshman year than their peers, and the first ACCESS class graduated at a rate well ahead of the university's average.

The freshman component of the ACCESS program proved to be a critical factor for student success. This component became the pilot program known as the Panther Living and Academic Community Experience (the PLACE) that formed the cornerstone for the new University College.

ACCESS is listed *in The New Era for Enrollment Management: Recruitment, Remediation and Retention in the 21-Century, a Directory of Promising Practices, Notable and Significant Programs for Higher Education* sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation and FIPSE. ACCESS/University College was a THECB Star Award finalist. ACCESS is part of a $400K FIPSE grant to disseminate best practices in recruitment, retention and remediation to four other HBCU's. ACCESS received the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Star Award in 2003.

Participants in the ACCESS program said that the teachers "cared" about their students. They showed this by:

(a) acknowledging students individually,

(b) asking students questions and listening to their responses with interest,

(c) explaining lessons in a step-by-step fashion to facilitate understanding,

(d) relating the curriculum to real-life experiences, especially those of the students,

(e) developing cooperative learning opportunities,

(f) drawing on students' previous knowledge,

(g) clarifying expectations and holding students accountable,

(h) availing themselves outside the normal class hours, and

(i) sharing their personal stories, which inspired students to reflect on their own lives.

Outstanding mentors. According to the 1995 National Household Survey, four million adults in the United States are studying English as a second language (ESL) or would like to be (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995). Approximately two-thirds of adult education programs currently provide instructional services for non-English speakers (Fitzgerald, 1995). In his examination on the profession of teaching ESL to adults who live and work in the United States, Fitzgerald offers suggestions both for beginning a career in this field and for continuing to grow as a professional.

The primary duty of an ESL teacher is to facilitate the development of communication skills in English, either in a classroom setting or in a one-on-one tutoring environment. Additionally, the ESL teacher should also work to provide academic language instruction for subject matter studies to their English language learners. In many program settings, teachers must also include substantive content beyond language instruction, such as employment skills, survival skills, cultural information, or American history and citizenship facts. Teachers must also take into consideration the implications of the learners' cultural differences and cultural adjustment processes. Other duties may include any combination of materials development or selection, lesson planning, curriculum development, assessment and evaluation, and even counseling referrals.

Programs in which adult ESL teachers work vary widely in terms of (1) setting—community-based organizations, correctional facilities, private educational institutions, workplace sites, community colleges; (2) program type—academic, non-academic, prevocational, vocational, workplace, survival ESL, citizenship; (3) approach—family literacy, participatory, whole language, tutorial; learner group: adults, college students, refugees, out-of-school youth, prisoners, high-level professionals; and (4) timing—part-time, day, evening, full-time (Guth, 1993; Wrigley, 1991). Each of these characteristics influences the specific nature of the teacher's work. Positions are also available in administration, research, and in policy and nonprofit organizations that support adult ESL programs (Parsons, 1995).

Although the work of the ESL teacher is varied and rewarding, there are challenges. As Willett and Jeannot (1993) indicate,

> Teachers in the field of ESL literacy work in the margins. They work in left-over spaces, with inappropriate materials, under unpleasant conditions, for little money or professional status, with students who are ignored and excluded by the dominant society. (p. 477)

Most teachers are part-time, hourly employees teaching in more than one program. Turnover rates are high, and burnout is common (Chisman, Wrigley, & Ewen, 1993; Kutner, 1992). ESL professionals often feel that recognition and compensation are less that adequate and that their programs are given a low status relative to other education components (Chisman et al, 1993; Pennington, 1992).

Many ESL teachers identify themselves as intrinsically motivated, focusing on rewards that are less tangible than financial compensation or professional status and

recognition: social service, creativity, connectedness to others, and sense of accomplishment (Pennington, 1992). Furthermore, practitioners of ESL tend to exhibit the behavior of "culturally relevant teachers" in that they are aware of their own cultural experiences, have a desire to learn from other cultures, and are interested in cross-cultural communication (Ernst, 1993). Because of this, they have strong feelings of commitment to and responsibility for the English learners in their classes.

Traditionally, immigrants have been very responsive to authority in that they have been taught to look up to authority figures and to take direction from them. This traditional value toward authority may affect the attitudes of the students toward their teachers, and in turn their teacher's views of the type of teaching they should use with these students might be affected.

The following responses from the participants expressed their rewarding and uplifting experiences with their ESL teacher as well as their immigrant students college coordinator, who aided them in their quest to attain a higher education.

> I enjoyed my ESL course. My teacher knew how to communicate the lesson and valued me as a student. (Participant #6, personal communication, December 2, 2004)

> My ESL teacher was the only person that understood me. This class was very helpful because it teaches you all the basics in English that you need. I learned how to read and speak in English. (Participant #9, personal communication, December 6, 2004)

> At the end of my senior year, I met this college coordinator who visited our school. She was the Immigrant Counselor for AISD. I was motivated by her. She influenced me to continue to go to school as well as his parents who are supportive. (Participant #2, personal communication, December 3, 2004)

> I received motivation from the Immigrant Counselor for AISD, she guided me through the process. (Participant #4, personal communication, December 7, 2004)

> I appreciate the Immigrant Counselor for believing in me to pursue an education for my future. (Participant #8, personal communication, December 10, 2004)

Preserving Self/Sustaining Hope (Resiliency)

and Maintaining Identity

What are some of the characteristics that are demonstrated by these immigrants that exhibit both their resiliency and capacity to respond effectively to ambiguous circumstances within a higher education environment?

Literature: Resiliency

Mexican immigrants lag behind other immigrants in educational completion, and they have scored lower on reading and math achievement tests than have white and immigrant Asian children (Kao & Tienda, 1995). The majority of data paints a gloomy picture of the status of Mexican immigrant youth, but at the same time, researchers are reporting the successes of many resilient youth who have overcome the toughest of odds to succeed.

Resiliency theory identifies protective factors present in the families, schools, and communities of successful youth that often are missing in the lives of troubled youth (Krovetz, 1999). When at least some of these protective factors are present, children

develop resiliency, that is, the ability to cope with adversity. According to Bonnie Benard (1991; 1997), there are at least four common attributes of resilient children:

- social competence
- problem-solving skills
- autonomy
- sense of purpose and future

Resiliency theory proposes that all of these attributes are present to some degree in most people. Whether they are strong enough to help individuals cope with adversity, however, depends on the presence of protective factors during childhood. A distinguishing factor shared by each resilient child was a long-term, close relationship with a caring, responsible parent or other adult. In this study, all of the participants effectively "bounced back."

Kimberly Gordon (1996) examined the self-concept and motivational patterns of 36 Hispanic youth in an urban school setting. The principal difference between resilient and non-resilient students was that the resilient youths had more faith in their cognitive abilities. The resilient youths excelled academically because they believed that they could understand the material and information presented in class and that they could do well on homework and tests.

Research in the fields of child and human development, effective schools, and competent communities reveals that successful development in any human system relates directly to the quality of relationships in the system and opportunities for participation in those relationships (Benard, 1991). Three key characteristics support productive development: caring relationships, communication of high expectations and positive

beliefs, and opportunities for participation. Werner and Smith (1992) argued that the most important of these protective factors is a caring relationship with someone, regardless of whether that person is a parent, teacher, or community mentor.

Five key protective factors of families, schools, and communities are needed for resiliency to occur:

- supportive relationships, particularly encouragement from school personnel and other adults
- student characteristics, such as self-esteem, motivation, and accepting responsibility
- family factors, such as parental support/concern and school involvement
- community factors, such as community youth programs (e.g., sports, clubs, hobbies)
- school factors, such as academic success and pro-social skills training

As noted above, the theme that arose during the dialogues was that of resiliency. Some participants chose to act or think in certain ways so as not to detour form their educational agendas and/or risk any part of their personal integrity. These examples of resiliency were often immersed in their encounters in high school.

The mere fact that all of the participants graduated from high school on time or in three years validates a level of resiliency. In addition to school, Participants #1 and #5 showed resiliency to their home life where they were expected to do many of the household chores and care for their younger siblings. These responsibilities did not hinder their capability to excel in school.

> My parents both have two jobs and arrive late in the evening. I help take care of my younger brother and sister with their homework and do my chores. (Participant #1, personal communication, December 5, 2004)
>
> My mother cleans homes during the day and hotels at night. My father works all day and will often take extra shifts in his job at the construction site to earn more money; I usually take care of my younger brother and help around the house. (Participant #5, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

Maintaining hope. According to Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001), immigrants who encounter a negative social mirror, structured inequality in the opportunity structure, as well as inferior schooling in violent and segregated neighborhoods, will face an arduous long-term struggle. In such cases, the issues faced by the immigrant generation are predictably quite different from those facing the second and subsequent generations. While the immigrant generation typically struggles to accommodate the inequities while maintaining hope, for too many of their children, hope is arguably the most tragic casualty of long-term racism and structured inequality.

Hope is the single trait that cuts across at least the initial stages of all immigrations. The hope for "a better tomorrow" is the inner voice that almost all immigrants recite as they enter a new country. Hope is a critical characteristic that may well account for the slight advantage that immigrants have over successive generations (Helms, 1990). It is a quality that is likely to shift and fade as the children of immigrants and the next generation, in turn, encounter the structural limitations and ambivalent embrace of their new home. Many children of immigrants come to drink from the well of hope only to find it poisoned (Rumbaut, 1994).

Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (1995) found that other elements play a role in the alchemy of ethnic identity (trans)formation. They are embedded within the daily social worlds that surround and support the immigrant child—his family, school, peer group, and community. When the family and the community are able to provide love, supervision, ambition, role models, and hope, they can help protect the children from the distrust and hate that they are likely to encounter in the outside world.

According to research, socioeconomic status plays an undeniable role; preexisting inequalities tend to intensify subsequent inequalities. Middle-class immigrants who arrive with more of what sociologists call "human capital" (education and resources) and "social capital" (networks and connections) will have an advantage in the struggle to protect and promote the welfare of their children (Massey, 1999). The neighborhoods and schools that parents can provide their children will play an important role in shaping their futures.

These students achieve bicultural and bilingual competencies that become an important part of their sense of self. The culturally social criticisms and the authority of their immigrant parents and elders are seen as legitimate, while learning standard English and doing well in school are viewed as skills that do not determine their sense of who they are. These participants easily communicate and make friends with members of their own ethnic group as well as with students and teachers.

> The basis of hope and the need to belong to a member of this society with the same opportunities, rights, and aspirations is something I dream about. (Participant #8, personal communication, December 10, 2004)

> My legal status is a big problem for me. I might not be able to find a job after graduating from college. But I hope one day that the Government will pass a law that I will get a job and be accepted. He further states, I hope that they will continue to pass more laws to give more opportunities to immigrants. We want to study like everyone else. (Participant #2, personal communication, December 3, 2004)

Identity crisis. Many important questions are relevant to an understanding of the realities new immigrants will face. If the reflected image is generally positive, the individual (adult or child) will be able to feel that he is worthwhile and competent. If the reflection is generally negative, it is extremely difficult to maintain an unblemished sense of self-worth (Winnicott, 1958). Data from a variety of studies demonstrate that immigrant students enter U.S. schools with highly positive attitudes toward education (Fuligni, 1997; Kao and Tienda, 1995; Steinberg et al., 1996; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

Equally important, how others view them is one of the vectors by which adolescents struggle to sort out a sense of identity and self. Immigrant youths must contend with the fact that they are culturally, ethnically, and racially "other." Sociologists have documented how immigration generates ambivalence at best and latent and manifest hostilities at worst (Espenshade, 1998). Hence, immigrant youths must face the usual challenges of adolescence while contending with the winds of discrimination their presence generates (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

Another source of strain and conflict is the fact that while they want to adapt to American society, to some extent they still want to keep their identity, and they feel they are being urged to move more quickly than they want to adopt American values. In particular they do not like the lack of concern and caring they feel characterizes the

American family; they want to maintain their traditional closeness. The immigrant students conveyed in their interviews that they feel as if their culture and traditions are not being recognized and accepted.

All of the participants graduated from high school and are enrolled in a Texas postsecondary institution. They told me of their aspirations to graduate, and their hope to stay in the U.S. and work. In conversations with all the students, information about their family issues associated with their experience of going to college were generally the same for them as with native students from Latino backgrounds.

It is well established that high school graduates whose parents have a higher income, a higher level of education, and higher educational expectations for their children are more likely to pursue a college education than others (Cross, 1987; Astin, 1993). This supports the importance of family background and family attitudes toward education in determining children's eventual educational attainment.

It is important to note the importance of academic support services for students who do not have similar family support toward educational achievement. When speaking to all of the male immigrants in the study, it was clear that their attitude toward working hard in school was positively associated with their desire to continue their education.

> The love for my family and brothers gives me a strong belief that I have a purpose in life, which is to give back to my family. I enjoy challenges and I have learned to continue to be self-motivated and remember to continue relying on myself. I thrive on dreaming to learn about new discoveries. (Participant #4, personal communication, December 7, 2004)

As participant #10 noted in his interview that his overall approach in life is "Just do it." He further states that his personal disposition is to remain positive. He clearly concedes that obstacles are daily occurrences expected in life.

> We don't see bad consequences as obstacles or barriers to our progress but only as expected in our daily lives, so we accept these as minor difficulties and move on. Even when we know we are receiving unfair treatment, we never look at these actions as something impossible or something to stop us from continuing to better our lives. (Participant #10, personal communication, December 11, 2004).

Participant #4 also reaffirms his continued optimism through the determination obtained from his journey that shaped his new identity.

> My adventures from my travel to the United States have made me who I am. Today, I am stronger and motivated. After what we have been through nothing can stop us. If I can do it, others can do it too…I have faith in myself. (personal communication, December 7, 2004)

Though their Mexican identity draws attacks on their educational and psychosocial well-being, their own resilience from subtractive elements and their capacity to embrace their cultural heritage has empowered them to continue on their pursuit to achieve as students. Knowing that the promise of a better future and of fulfilling the dual-frame of reference "here and there" is possible, the participants practice adaptive persistence as they weave in and out of tragic experiences and relish the engaging and positive ones where they can.

Chapter Summary

This chapter involved an overview of the study, interview process, qualitative analysis, including coding the data, thematic responses, and an extensive narrative interview. It also included supportive data from other authors and the researcher's perspective of the study.

Primarily, the participants talked openly about their experiences in relation to the interview questions. Five themes were developed from the rich responses and stories narrated by the immigrants. These thematic data, which are very informative and captivating, were not intended to represent the entire population of this ethnic group, or that of non-study participants similarly settled. Significantly, the data express themes elaborated at a particular point in the ongoing lives of the ten participants of this study.

This chapter includes extensive data as told to the researcher by the participants. The goal was to have their story told with significance on developing themes, from which a rich tapestry can be embraced. Chapter Five will provide more analysis by comparing thematic data with previous literature. Chapter Five will also provide further discussion on the findings, implications for future recommendations for programs, and a conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"Nothing is impossible to a willing heart."
—John Heywood

Summary

The face of America has changed dramatically over the last few years. The presence of diversity is now crucially active in every aspect of society, and trends suggest that immigration from non-English-speaking countries will continue to grow at a steady rate. The Hispanic population continues to comprise the largest number of newly arrived immigrants striving to learn the language and skills necessary to succeed in America.

The purpose of this study was (a) to identify and describe the unique characteristics and migration experiences of undocumented male Mexican immigrants who are currently enrolled as freshman in selected Texas institutions of higher education and (b) to analyze those factors that demonstrate their resiliency in working at attaining their educational goals by effectively adjusting and responding to the ambiguous conditions they encounter in colleges and universities. The design of the research compiled real experiences, which could be used by educators and policymakers to serve this unique Mexican population (namely referred to as Hispanics in the United States) better. By engaging the participants in retrospective dialogue, it afforded them the

opportunity to become interactively involved in generating and interpreting information about their experiences that would be helpful for improving their educational aspirations. Throughout the process, the participants were active, providing meaningful critical reflections that increased the value of the findings and implicitly empowered them in considering the appropriate outcomes (Kieffer, 1981). To conduct the study, the researcher met the ten participants individually in an interactive session, which allowed them to reflect and interpret their experiences. The researcher posed the questions to clarify resiliency (viewed as areas of coping skills with American culture) to the undocumented male Mexican immigrants. This chapter will include a summary of paramount themes found in this research study.

Findings

The goal of this study was to understand how the participants experience school and how their experiences affect their identity formation and subsequent achievement orientation. In order to gain a rich source of data by which to develop this understanding, questions were utilized to guide the dialogue. The content of the participants' responses directed dialogue within each session. Open-ended questions that allowed for expression of thoughts and emotions were paramount in creating a climate where these young male immigrants' voices could be heard non-judgmentally.

Each dialogue session provided an opportunity in which to engage the study participants. The intent was to engage each participant by posing questions that prompted a rich introspective description of their identity and stimulate a full

examination of the factors that contributed to the formation of their resiliency. The relationship of resiliency to school experience was revealed within the content of the responses.

In regard to the research questions derived in this study, the participants' responses were intriguing and informative. The overall resiliency from these students' experiences socialized their higher education journey as well as acquired skills, and understanding of American society. This population demonstrated acceptance and accommodation to certain social expectations that were needed in order to prevail in their new institutional and social environment.

In summation, the data from the interview results illuminate the challenges the Mexican immigrants confront in their transitions and trajectories to higher education in American context. The single most important characteristic of Mexican immigrants is their resilience and capacity to survive and adapt in the face of difficult life circumstances (Trueba, 1999). Immigrants suffer from ambiguous loss. Beloved people and places are left behind, but they remain keenly present in the psyche of the immigrant. Migration loss has special characteristics. It brings with it losses of all kinds, such as family members, language, customs, rituals, and the land itself. Yet, migration loss is not absolutely clear, complete, and irretrievable (Chavez, 1985). Migration represents what Boss calls a "crossover" in that it has elements of both types of ambiguous loss (Boss, 1999).

Particularly, in the case of Mexican immigrants, the research has identified multiple factors that are significantly associated with family cohesion, the immigrants'

psychological well-being, their school work discipline, and educational ambitions. The themes that are mentioned in the findings are:

1. Experience of School and Community,
2. Family/Social Networks-Orientations
3. Educational Support System, and Preserving Self/Sustaining Hope (Resiliency)
4. Maintaining Identity.

All of these form a psychological complex of interrelated experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and achievement.

Despite the often-challenging circumstances, and despite the patterns and paradoxes of acculturation explored in Chapter II, the main affirmation of resiliency emerging from this study is noteworthy. In retrospect, this select group of participants has attained achievements worth further analysis by educators and policymakers. Despite their poor social economic backgrounds, a climate of pervasive prejudice and ongoing obstacles in adapting to their new social and school environments in the United States, the participants of this study out performed most undocumented Mexican immigrants. In comparison to other Mexican immigrants in this study, the evidence to their success is the fact that these participants were able to attain higher education.

Interestingly, while the study identified the factors and characteristics shaping their identity, the immigrant's resiliency in dealing with ambiguity was revealed as being a major contributor to the immigrant's character. Hence, resiliency is the nexus of their success. Undocumented Mexican immigrants with their inherent characteristics have

developed a resiliency through their arduous journeys into the U.S. In order to achieve success, they create a strategy that responds to the development of their dual frame identity style, resulting in maintaining a positive self-perception. Consequently, they achieve their goals through attaining higher education.

Crossing the River

Characteristics

Mexican immigrants seek to enter into the United States in hope of encountering the Promised Land. It is their hope and faith that gives them the determination and the will to overcome any and all obstacles that come before them. They are cognizant of the new set of challenges awaiting them in the United Sates pertaining to cultural differences, language barriers and sociological scrutiny among others.

There are those individuals in the United States who perceive Mexican immigrants as insignificant, some fear them and/or reject them, not knowing or understanding that these immigrants do a lot by way of enriching society and the country as a whole. Looking at their physical journey enables us to explore new frontiers and understand just how important a person's will, determination, mind, heart and soul can make the most arduous situation tolerable and the impossible seem possible. It is important to understand the strong bond between family members within a Mexican family. They are a close-knit group that does not allow anybody or anything to come between them. If a person were working in the United States in order to provide for his family back in Mexico, it is highly unlikely that he would remain in the U.S. and abandon

his family. Nine out of ten times, the man who works seasonally in the U.S. returns to Mexico with almost every cent earned from his labor, in order to provide for his family. It is through the reassurance of their parents that the children of these Mexican immigrants seem as though they were born with self-assurance. On the contrary, these people are humble and appreciate all that they have. Even if all they have is each other; they feel richer than those with a wealth of tangible goods. It is their love for one another and for God that gives them the strength to overcome any obstacle. They are instilled with a sense of pride taught to them by parents, and then they in turn teach their children so that they always remember their heritage and its importance on establishing and maintaining their identity. For those living in the United States, far away from the place they once resided and called home, it is important to preserve their culture in their minds and in their hearts or else it will be lost forever. Through storytelling, food preparation, as well as daily rituals that did not change with the introduction of common household appliances, Mexican immigrant families do what they can to keep their traditions alive. A parent's dream for their children to have better lives, seems to be the most important factor that influenced the decision of many families to make the bold move to cross into the United States. The one thing that the parents of these participants of this study reiterated to their children once they were in the United States was the importance of a good education. The notion of obtaining an education and striving to do well in school almost became second nature for most of the students in this study. Often they excelled in sports but more importantly they could be found at the top of their class as either salutatorians or valedictorians.

Crossing Over

The U.S./Mexican border is a 1,952-mile long boundary that stretches from the shores of the Pacific Ocean near San Diego, California, to where the mouth of the Rio Grande River meets the shore of the Gulf of Mexico in Brownsville, Texas. From a political standpoint, it is the frontier between Mexico and the United States. Geographically, it is the border that separates North America from Latin America. For Mexican immigrants, the border separating the U.S. from Mexico is merely a place where they are subjected to physical pain and suffering, family separation, cultural displacement, political marginality, in many instances legal vulnerability, economic destitution, personal alienation among other negative situations. More importantly, Mexican immigrants acknowledge it as being what separates poverty in Latin America from the prosperity of the United States. In a world, seemingly dominated by globalization, many immigrants are seeking to escape their condemnation to poverty, where in Mexico they make three dollars a day or less. In comparison, the United States offers the temptation to immigrants of earning forty dollars a day or more. It is no wonder that these individuals are willing to risk their lives for the opportunity. Countless immigrants attempt to enter the United States illegally each and every day. Evidence has proven that it has never been easy to cross from Mexico to the United States but in the last decade, it has become far more difficult and dangerous. As a result of increasingly stricter border policies, in addition to the naturally physical barriers that include; long, vast deserts with sporadic areas of heavily wooded and thorny brush, these obstacles not

only pose a dangerous threat but they pose a deadly one as well. Often attempts made to enter into the United States legally are denied, because of political and economic reasons, therefore these immigrants are faced with the desperation of crossing illegally by any means necessary. As they encounter desolate areas of long stretches of deserts and areas of woods naturally forested with thorny brush such as the native Mesquite tree, they bypass impermeable walls, dodge surveillance cameras, and do everything humanly possible to escape detection by modern-day military technology and the trained eye of border patrol agents. Naturally, some Mexican immigrants succumb to the dangerous and deadly terrain, whereas others are lost to the unfortunate circumstances of not having food and water to survive. Some of these immigrants are detected, then apprehended and medically treated for conditions suffered throughout their journey, and then they are placed in immigration detention centers before being deported only to repeat the effort all over again until they are successful. Although it is rare, some Mexican immigrants are fortunate to make it across on their first attempt, meanwhile an average of one immigrant dies trying to cross from Mexico into the United States every day.

Crossing Over (Experience) and Developing Resiliency

For some, the details of migrating to the United States were sketchy, but for most of the Mexican immigrants interviewed for my study, the particulars were vividly recollected. They agreed to tell their stories of their past life in Mexico and the overwhelming ambiguity of adapting to a different culture. The resiliency lay within their unique personal struggles that were revealed as they described their physical journey

to the United States with spiritual undertones. The individuals spoke of the urgent and often extreme situations prompting them to risk their lives in effort to cross over to the United States illegally. It is every parent's dream, that their children have a wonderful future with unlimited opportunities. Mexican immigrants realize that this is not possible on the Mexican side of the border where there are no employment opportunities, education is unaffordable and the need to escape repression is an everyday battle. The theme of immigration has been studied from various aspects to include: economic, cultural, political and spiritual; however, little research has been done to focus on the ambiguous and resilient experience of the Mexican immigrant. The Mexican immigrant struggles with ambiguity by way of exigency for them to abandon their families and conform to the customs and standards of a new country and a new way of life. In addition to struggling with ambiguity, the Mexican immigrant faces an undue amount of stress and pressure for them to adapt to this arduous situation of interacting with people who perceive them as being problematic, unwelcome and as intruders to the American workforce. The Mexican immigrant also wrestles with resiliency in mustering up the strength for their families to adapt to the tough world of globalization far different from the ways of the world they had been accustomed to. The Mexican immigrants interviewed during this study, told stories of their physical experience when entering the United States illegally did not have the infamy that it does today as regarded by a majority of U.S. citizens.

The act of entering the United States illegally is unconventional, whether done by the ancient Asians trekking across the Bering Strait or the Haitians as stowaways afloat

desperate boats as compared to Mexicans clung to the undercarriages of cargo trucks all in search of a better way of life. Most Mexican immigrants have come to realize that the constant things in life, which pertain to the bare necessities, are often taken for granted because they are just that "constant." The cliché of not realizing what you have until it is gone, is true! For those who have known what it is like, not to have food to eat, clothing and shoes for each family member, a secure job that guaranteed an hourly wage and/or access to medicine and care that was reliable, they (the Mexican immigrants) are the ones who refuse to take these necessities for granted. Contrary to what some U.S. citizens think, migration stimulates the economy by creating energy in the form of money, labor and values.

One individual in particular, who will be referred to as Juan Dominguez, in a particular told of a situation involving a dwelling described to be smaller than a shack that provided shelter for some 15 members of his immediate and extended family members. After witnessing firsthand the account of his siblings and relatives forced to panhandle on the streets until all hours of the night for mere pocket change, Juan remembers his father's decision to illegally cross the family. The most important factor, which influenced his father's decision to risk not only his life but those of his family as well, was due economic and medical distress issues. Juan remembered a particular time when his father did not have money for medical treatment and his younger sister became seriously ill. Juan's father walked nearly two hours with her to the hospital, only to return to find yet another family member ill.

About some 400 miles south of the U.S. border town of Laredo, Texas is a town called Tanchital, Mexico. It is a small, destitute village, which did not offer much to its citizens; thus, forcing them to seek refuge elsewhere. This was originally Juan Dominguez's hometown until his father made the bold decision to uproot the family and cross into the United States. Juan Dominguez's family was not fortunate to have succeeded on their first attempt. Juan was reluctant to speak of the experience at first, but then he felt as though he did not want to appear as being ashamed of what his parents did and how much they sacrificed to bring the family to the United States and therefore he agreed to tell his story. At the time, Juan was barely fifteen years old, with two younger sisters and his mother's frail health did not make the journey any easier. It was late one November evening, and the temperature was rather cold outside nearing about fifty degrees, the family stowed away on a train, inside one of its boxcars. Juan tried to help his mother and sisters as they did their best to try and stay warm by huddling together. Juan also remembers watching with bewilderment, as people sat on the edge of the boxcar with their legs dangling outside. As Juan and his family clung to dear life, an effort not to succumb to hypothermia, they watched as some stowaways fell out of the boxcar, while others lost an arm or a leg. Juan remembers one being run over by the train, whereas the others presumably died. Juan agonized over the guilt he was consumed with for filching the other stowaways' rations of food while they slept, in order to provide food and nourishment for his mother and sisters. Juan and his family were lucky to make it to the border, where they faced an even more difficult journey ahead of them. Before crossing the border, Juan and his family managed to conceal their presence from Mexican

authorities. Immediately upon reaching the U.S. town of Laredo, Texas, Juan remembers his father checking to see if the coast was clear. His father then motioned to Juan to help his mother and sisters while he kept watch. Juan remembers walking aimlessly for hours, which soon turned into days, with his family because nobody knew the area and it was heavily wooded, with thorny brush in some areas. They ran out of food after the first two days and on the third they ran out of water. Juan's mother started to experience hallucinations and headaches, followed by throwing up, until she could barely see straight. Juan said that his mother hallucinated by seeing images of her late parents and she would cry uncontrollably for the daughter that had died, when Juan tried to reassure her that little Josefina was fine and that she was sitting next to her. She had these bouts of disillusionment quite often until they were discovered. After four days of walking with a substantiated amount of resting so that Juan's mother could try and overcome her ailments, the border patrol spotted them and another family that was traveling within a couple of yards from them. The Dominguez's surrendered themselves to the authorities, while a member from the other family was reluctant to be taken into custody. Juan remembered hearing the shouting from the authorities and from the young man's family members for him to stop but he wouldn't. Juan described the young man to be in his late teens, and he also said that the young man failed to yield and then provoked an agent to defend himself, when a Border Patrol agent shot the young man, Sunday afternoon at mile marker 9. Juan and his family along with the members of the other family were immediately apprehended and sent to an immigration detention center where they were soon deported.

Juan's father then sought the services of a "coyote" through various confidants and from sources he trusted over the years. A "coyote" or smuggler of illegal immigrants earns $500 to $3,000 per person smuggled illegally into the United States. The act of illegally smuggling immigrants into the United States consists of a well-organized group of individuals appointed by and entrusted to a single coyote. Each coyote builds a reputation that is based on his success rate and other factors, which naturally contributes to the price that they charge. Often the prices are outrageously expensive; however, Mexican nationals consider the price to be worth every penny. It is a result of their desperation and vulnerability that undocumented Mexican immigrants are easily taken advantage of and swindled out of their life savings. Fortunately, Juan and his family successfully crossed into the United States on their second attempt with the help of a coyote.

Ambiguity

An opportunity for a better life is the important message that echoes in the stories that the Mexican immigrants told. For the past four years, the Dominguez's have contributed to the energy and economy of this country by transforming themselves from Mexican immigrants into people who have adapted to the ways of the American culture. This process is considered a "dual frame of reference" which works as a mechanism to overcome through learning, but not as a threat to their own identity, thus they accommodate without assimilation. They talked about the people, places, and things that they left behind in coming to the United States and the manner in which they managed to stay connected to their roots in Mexico. The agonizing decision to immigrate to the U.S.

was not effected by the prospect of enduring future hardships. Instead, this family feared the horror stories told to them of the failed attempts to cross undocumented immigrants, involving drowning accidents as well as numerous stories of rape, kidnapping, theft and sometimes murder of the illegal immigrants by the coyote's assistants. When asked if they were deported and would face the opportunity of having to do it over again, would they? Each individual replied, "yes!"

Created Identity

Mexican immigrants perceive themselves as hard-working individuals who take advantage of opportunities available to them only in the United Stated but not in their native country, Mexico. They have not lost sight of who they are because they stay true to their traditions and to their heritage. They maintain many of their household customs, and they make many their ethnic meals without varying the ingredients. Significantly, Mexican immigrants maintain their native Spanish language. Some Mexican immigrants learn the English language and speak it only, while others have made it their mission to perfect their usage of the English language because they want to ingratiate themselves into this new society. The thought of leaving behind family members whom they have not seen for years is the most difficult struggle of all. For example Juan lost his paternal grandfather to a pedestrian/car accident. It was reported to Juan and his family that abuelo (grandpa) was walking home from the corner grocery store when a car came barreling down the road and around the corner. The driver of vehicle apparently did not see abuelo as his car struck him. Abuelo died instantly. It was incredibly difficult

because Juan and his family were not U.S. citizens; therefore, they were unable to attend the modest funeral service and they could not be with other family members to mourn the loss of their beloved abuelo. They feel isolated and emotionally cutoff from their family in Tanchital, MX. It is situations like this, which prevents them from being able to be with their loved ones during this time of need.

The Developmental Model of Immigrant Resiliency derived from the interviews explains the process in which Mexican immigrants structure their new ethnic identity. First, the immigrants leave their enclave with their characteristics including family traditions, values, and beliefs. Secondly, the riveting stories that they told of their journeys crossing into the United States risking their lives for a better future demonstrates resiliency, an emotional behavior, which is attributed to their journey. This provides them the strength and courage to persevere. Subsequently, the immigrants develop the ability to confront and deal with ambiguity. For example the manner in which they mourn the loss of a family member and the method in which they adapt to living in the here and now. Lastly, they managed to maintain their identity with a positive self-image throughout the adversity that they experience.

Cultural dislocation and social mirroring strongly influences the re-shaping of the immigrant's identity. Immigrant and minority youth pick up powerful cues from the social environment about what is expected of them. Upon arrival to the United States, these undocumented Mexican immigrants are forced into cultural expectations in the assimilation of their identity. Their voyage from Mexico to the United States suggests a counter migration as well as a change in social persona.

Ambiguous indicates the presence of two or more possible meanings. As defined in Chapter II, ambiguous loss describes situations in which loss is unclear, incomplete, or partial. There are two types of ambiguous losses: (1) people who are physically absent but psychologically present and (2) family members are physically present but psychologically absent. Accordingly, those confronted with such ambiguous losses fluctuate between hope and hopelessness. As noted above, undocumented Mexican immigrants have suffered while migrating to the United States. However, in contrast to these participants, a lack pf resiliency causes emotions to suppress feelings making it impossible for people to move on with their lives. In consequence, the central message uncovered from these participants of this term means that the resiliency obtained from their harsh experiences allows them to successfully deal with ambiguities and thereby moving on with their lives. With this understanding, educators and guidance counselors can be able to recognize those immigrant students filtering in their schools and struggling to regain their lives.

The ambiguous losses endured by the undocumented Mexican immigrants are common and painful condition. Undocumented Mexican immigrants endure ambiguous losses known as a common and painful condition. This ambiguous experience is entrenched in their life as a result of their journey from Mexico into their new host country but they remain forever homesick.

Conclusion

Immigration generates change. As this study has highlighted, the immigrants themselves undergo a variety of transformations. "Likewise, immigration inevitably changes the society of the dominant culture. In the United States today we eat, speak, and dance differently than we did thirty years ago, in part because of large-scale immigration" (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001, p.12). Essentially, change is never easy. The changes brought about by the evolving developing immigration require mutual accommodation and negotiation. The ongoing and future expansion of the Mexican immigrant and the present Hispanic population in the U.S. has caused most education officials and policy makers in this country to ask themselves a number of questions about the services they provide for this burgeoning population. The two terms, retention and success in higher education, are used synonymously. Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) describe the term integration to mean assimilation, the separation and abandonment of one's own cultural identity combined with an embracement of the American culture. When integration is reflected in the school community, it increases retention, and if integration does indeed mean assimilation, the question begs to be examined, "Do Mexican immigrant students have to assimilate in order to succeed in higher education?"

Educational researchers argue that to succeed in the college environment, students have to embrace and internalize the "college culture." Students can do this by participating in clubs and organizations, becoming more active in academic activities such as research programs, mentoring and tutoring, or simply by making use of

professors' office hours. Participation in these activities creates stronger bonds between the student, the institution, and its culture.

Therefore, according to research and the findings identified through the interviews of the study, immigrant students do not have to assimilate fully in order to succeed in college. Nevertheless, in addition to their inherent resilient attributes acquired through their migration experiences, they should become better integrated into the college or university culture if they want to have the greatest chance of success in higher education. On the contrary, keeping their background (and language, if they speak Spanish) is a valuable asset in this increasingly ethnically diverse country. Being bilingual and/or being attuned to people of different backgrounds or countries will increasingly become not just an advantage but rather a necessity.

Despite the evident benefits of increased participation in college related activities, some argue that a minority student who comes from a significantly different background can fully integrate into the college culture only by abandoning his own culture, which is presumed incompatible with the culture of successful college students.

Rather than advocating that immigrant children abandon all elements of their culture as they embark on their uncertain journey, a more promising path is to cultivate and nurture the emergence of new hybrid identities and bicultural competencies (Orfield, 1998). These hybrid cultural styles creatively blend elements of the old culture with that of the new, unleashing new energies and potentials (Wilson, 1997).

In Chapter II, ambiguity is mentioned in the review of literature and is a major implication to the study in addition to resiliency. Immigrants frequently leave behind a host of difficulties, and although in the new land other challenges are present, the old troubles may make the new ones tolerable. This dual frame of reference acts as a perceptual filter by which the newcomers process their new experiences (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 1995).

Immigrant families and their children face multiple challenges. Accordingly, the problems that have derived from this theme are part of their daily lives, but most immigrant families cope well with the stresses. Traditionally, these immigrants become more adapted and less distraught. This task of surviving is easier for those who are able to settle in stable and close knit communities. Most migrants will find that over all, their gains outweigh their losses.

Hope is in the heart of every immigrant. Possibilities for the future appear obvious. At the same time immigrants are preoccupied daily with the mundane tasks required to survive and move forward. The immigration process consumes nearly all the psychological and physical energies of immigrants. But immigrants' dual frame of reference makes them optimistic about the future. Most come to experience their living and working situation as tolerable and, indeed, preferable to the one they have left behind. Participant's #4 vignettes capture a number of themes that we have found in the lives of many children of immigrants.

Immigrants overwhelmingly differ enormously in their psychological, social, and cultural origins, they face complex circumstances that add to the developmental stressors

of youth and display a wide variation of achievement and in motivation among each other. These achievement gaps are widened or narrowed as a result of the interplay of their inherent characteristics: immigration experiences, acculturation processes, and life change events, diverse peer groups and school contexts.

The common thread that was woven throughout the responses of the participants was that of resiliency. The fact that each of the participants endured arduous experiences when assimilating into the United States infers a message of hope in striving for those striving for a better life through higher education rather than merely surviving. The experience that those immigrants confront is the "crossing from their country to the U.S." Overcoming the trauma of this experience enables them to achieve self-confidence, perseverance, and, ultimately, success. The immigrants know that the Hispanics/U.S. born citizens have many opportunities and programs such as Federal & Government assistance. Therefore, they must work twice as hard in order to support themselves and have better lives.

Recommendations and Implications

The research on resiliency and examples of successful resiliency programs share one common factor: community collaborative programs that recognize and capitalize on the assets and strengths of Mexican immigrant youth and their families. Mexican immigrant families have many strengths that need to be identified. It is clear that more resiliency programs should use these strengths to foster caring relationships, by more active participation by the counselors, increased parent-child interactions, and high

expectations. Families, schools, and communities must work together to achieve this goal.

Based upon the findings of this investigation, the following recommendations for practice in community colleges are made:

Raise public awareness of the need for greater investments in post-secondary education. The public effort can stimulate enough interest and support to develop and implement the programs needed to increase the educational achievement of Mexican immigrants, Hispanics and other minorities. Over the past decade, policymakers and the public have focused almost exclusively on reforming the primary and secondary education system. The public is much less aware of the pressures of increased enrollments that the nation's colleges and universities are facing pressures that threaten to close off access to higher education at a time when demand is increasing. Greater efforts should be made to inform the public of current demographic and economic trends and of the need to provide postsecondary institutions with the means to respond effectively to the growing demand for their services.

Focus as much attention on keeping students in college as is currently given to preventing students from dropping out of high school. Both two-year and four-year colleges should focus more attention on retaining their students. Significant strides in increasing the share of Hispanics earning a bachelor's degree would be made if Hispanic students already enrolled in college persisted through four years of college at the same rate as their white and Asian counterparts.

Coordinate interventions across levels of education. Doubling the rate at which Hispanics earn a bachelor's degree will require increases in Hispanic performance at all levels of education from primary school to high school, in the transition from high school to college, and in college. Although, there are local instances of collaboration and coordination between individual high schools and colleges, each level of education has designed its programs with little attention to the next level of education. Greater systemic efforts should be made to ensure that students needing support continue to receive it when they move from one level of education to another. Research has generally concluded that one time interviews have a short life span and that greater success is generally achieved by sustained intervention over time.

Support expansion of high school, and college based programs. There needs to be more programs mirroring the ACCESS Program. As well as, outreach support programs that provides counseling, mentoring, tutoring, and remediation. More importantly, during the transition period from high school to college, during the transition period from two year colleges to four year colleges, and in college. Currently, these programs reach only a small percentage of the population that may benefit from these services.

Support evaluations of existing programs and experimentation with new programs. A better understanding of the effectiveness of programs that have already been developed to help disadvantaged students at various stages in their education should be developed.

Recommendations for Further Research

This exploration has allowed examination into the experience of ten undocumented Mexican immigrants and who are enrolled in a selected Texas institution of higher education in Central Texas. The relevance of their encounters to other young men of similar background living in other parts of the United States should be studied.

The ten young men in this study allowed us to understand, from their perspective, what it feels like to experience the world of school. Their stories are courageous and heart-warming. They allowed us to feel the impact of resiliency and ambiguous losses that they endured. This allows us, as educators, to view at not only what we do within our educational institutions, but also allow us, as human beings, to search our souls to find the answer to alleviate this problem.

The preparation of this dissertation requires learning about models of social behavior, organizational behavior, and fusion processes that work with not only this particular population, but with many other populations in this society who do not fit into visions of mainstream. Furthermore, their identity puts them at risk. Additionally, this study has revealed that there are teachers and counselors who can make a significant difference providing hope and inspiration for future immigrant generations.

These educators have chosen to embrace ideologies that promote behaviors and practices that engage rather than alienate. They hold high standards for all their students rather than only for a pre-selected group. They maintain vision that embraces the theory of a pluralistic society and enact the virtues of social justice. They work across cultures and thereby bridge the differences that enable "difference" as a border to overcome,

rather than attributes to appreciate. Future studies should focus on the qualities and traits of powerful teachers as seen here in this study and that future research examine the standardization of screening and or educational programs that promote and foster these qualities for those entering the profession of teaching.

The following recommendations could also be pursued for further study, in order to understand how the ambiguous losses affect the immigrant's identity at a community college.

A beneficial study would entail a follow up on these participants in three years and reveal their progress. It would be valuable to learn if the present programs at the college or university have helped these immigrants to persevere in their higher educational dreams.

Study further programs similar to ACCESS. This would be an interesting topic to explore if other colleges or universities in other states are implementing these programs to assist Mexican immigrants into post secondary institutions.

Replicate this study to explore other immigrants of a different ethnic background. This study would be important to identify and compare the themes used with a different ethnic group in contrast to the Mexican immigrants and discover what characteristics and experiences help them to succeed or fail in a post-secondary institution.

Focus on second-generation Hispanics who have been born and raised in the United States. It would be valuable for educators and policy makers to understand and

identify the differences and develop programs accordingly to these diverse groups of Latin Americans in the United States.

Conduct a quantitative study to determine the rate of persistence and academic completion for the Mexican immigrants from a high school diploma or post-secondary institution.

Community colleges are key participants in the immigrants' education due in large part to access, affordability, location, and the multitude of English as a Second Language programs (Szelenyi & Chang, 2002). Nationally, 6% of the high-school aged students are immigrants. These numbers represent potential incoming community college students. These various recommendations support the significance of studying immigrants in the U.S. The influx of immigrants in the U.S. is at an all-time high, and the demand for access to higher education is eminent. Despite the high drop out rate in the United States, this study could manifest many outcomes and help students succeed. According to existing research, the educational status of immigrant youth is an area that requires further exploration.

Meanwhile, while different observers of the educational system have proposed an array of possible solutions, there is a general agreement that reinvesting in the schooling of children is a crucial first step. It is important to recognize that immigrant youth are a growing sector of the school population; policy interventions and funding decisions must be attuned to their special needs. If immigrant youth are well served today, they will become important contributors to the future well being of our country.

The evidence suggests that America would be better off if immigrants were more skilled. And it can be plausibly argued that a smaller number of immigrants would be beneficial for the country. But major changes in immigration policy occur only rarely. Therefore, the road ahead is long and fraught with dangers. But the adverse effects of the 'Second Great Migration' will not go away simply because some do not wish to acknowledge their existence. (Borjas, 2001, p.116)

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Tell me where you are from?
2. How long have you lived in the U.S.?
3. Who do you live with?
4. Tell me about yourself and your family?
5. Tell me about your parents, brothers and sisters?
6. Tell me what motivates you to succeed in the U.S.?
7. Tell me about the ambiguous obstacles that an undocumented male Mexican immigrant encounters in succeeding in America?
8. In spite of these obstacles; What makes you continue/persevere in America?
9. Who and/or What influenced your decision to pursue a higher education?
10. Is a higher education a vital key to success for an undocumented male Mexican immigrant? Why?
11. What did you learn from your culture and how is it different from the American culture?
12. Tell me about your experience as a student?
13. How and when did you learn to speak and read English? Tell me about your experience?
14. Tell me about your experience while learning English?
15. What is required to succeed in obtaining a higher education?
16. Are you glad you came to the U.S.? or do you wish you had stayed in Mexico? Why?

Appendix B

Definitions

For purposes of this study, the following terms will apply. Some of the terms are defined differently in different cultural contexts. The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" provide definitions of some important terms for the purpose of the present study. Many theorists argue that it is problematic to label diverse national origin and cultural groups under the single heading of "Hispanic" (Bean & Tienda, 1999; Yetman, 1999). There has also been a great deal of debate as to the appropriateness of the term "Latino" as opposed to the term "Hispanic." A brief history of the two terms is as follows. In 1978, the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) began to use the label "Hispanic," which they defined as "a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race"(Marin and Marin, 1991, p. 20). One of the difficulties with this term is that it does not distinguish between people of Spanish and Latin American ancestry. It also excludes people from countries such as Brazil and Portugal.

The term "Latino" is often used in order to emphasize the "…political, geographical, and historical links present among the various Latin American nations" (Marin and Marin, p. 21). This term is also problematic in that it disregards language and includes people who trace their origins to Brazil, Belize, and the Guyanas. People from Spain, Portugal, and the Philippines are also excluded from the definition. Most data on Hispanics are collected by agencies following the OMB definition of "Hispanic." Government agencies such as the Census Bureau generally provide both labels together;

therefore I will use the two terms synonymously, but adhere to the OMB definition of Hispanic. As a result, in this study, since I will be focusing on Mexican immigrants from the country of Mexico which is part of Latin America, I will refer to them as "Mexican" and use this term interchangeably with "Hispanic" and "Latino" as well.

Assimilate–to represent as similar, analogize, compare, equate identity, liken, and match, parallel.

Acculturate–to fit for companionship with others, especially in attitude or manners: acculturate, humanize, and socialize.

Bicultural–of or relating to two distinct cultures in one nation or geographic region.

La pulga–an open flea market resembling a Mexican market (Ainsley, 1998).

Resiliency–is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress. Such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. It means bouncing back from difficult experiences. However, Clauss-Ehlers (2004) has advocated for a more inclusive definition of the factors that promote resilience. She suggests that culture, ethnicity, and environment play key roles in the manifestation of resiliency in individuals and in communities, particularly among minorities.

Transnationalism–is the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement" (Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton, 1992, p.1). In other words, transnational migration implies that migrants do not just leave one social setting to go to another: the very process of crossing borders creates new social and cultural patterns, ideas, and behaviors. Transnational migrants not

only grapple with making sense of a different place but can also transform both the place and themselves through their actions. The term "transnationalism" draws attention to the connections between people and places as well as connections that extend well beyond obvious national borders (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, p.1).

First Generation–Born outside the United States, its territories or possessions. Can be naturalized U.S. citizens, legal immigrants or undocumented immigrants (Edmonston and Passel, 1994).

Second Generation–Born in the United States with at least one foreign born parent, U.S. citizens by birth (Edmonston and Passel, 1994).

Third-plus Generations–Born in the United States with both parents also born in the United States. U.S. citizens by birth (Edmonston and Passel, 1994).

Familism–valuing nuclear and extended family needs over individual ones (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987) has been empirically associated with resilience among Mexican American youth (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997).

Undocumented immigrant–An undocumented immigrant is also a non-U.S. citizen who has entered the United States illegally. In fact, an undocumented immigrant has violated all the same U.S. laws as an illegal alien. The only difference is that an undocumented immigrant is presumed to be "innocent" of violating U.S. laws. Additionally, so-called undocumented immigrants are granted amnesty from our immigration laws. (www.Adversity.net/Terms_Definitions/TERMS/Illegal-Undocumented.htm)

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